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OF

SAINT ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI,

DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH,

Bishop of Saint Agatha, and Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN.

EDITED BY

REV. EUGENE GRIMM,

Priest of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

THE ASCETICAL WORKS.

Volume XVIII.

LETTERS.

Volume I.

PART I.

General Correspondence.

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RN̄DE PATER:

Memoriam gloriosi Congregationis SS. Redemptoris Fundatoris, centesimo, ab ejus obitu, adventante anno, pio et admodum opportuno consilio recolere aggressus es, dum omnia ipsius opera anglice vertenda, et typis edenda curasti. Summus itaque Pontifex, cui tum S. Doctoris exaltatio, tum fidelium utilitas summopere cordi est libentissime excepit 9 volumina huc usque edita, quæ Ei offerre voluisti. Ac dum meritas Tibi laudes de hac perutili tua cura præbet, et gratias de filiali oblatione agit, Benedictionem, quam tuis obsequentissimis litteris petiisti, Emi quoque archiepiscopi Baltimorensis commendationi obsecundans, ex intimo corde impertiit.

Hæc ad Te deferens fausta cuncta ac felicia a Domino Tibi adprecor.

Paternitatis Tuæ,

Addictissimus,

M. CARD. RAMPOLLA.

ROMAE, die 4 Junii, 1888.

TRANSLATION.

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As the centenary of the death of the illustrious Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer drew near, you conceived the pious and appropriate plan of shedding a new lustre on his memory by translating all his works into English and publishing them. The Holy Father, therefore, who has at heart the spiritual advancement of the faithful, as well as the exaltation of the holy Doctor, has most graciously accepted the nine volumes thus far published, which you wished to present to him. While bestowing upon you well-deserved praise for your useful labor, and thanking you for the gift inspired by your filial love, he gives you from his heart the blessing which you humbly asked for in your letter, complying also with the request of the Most Rev. Archbishop of Baltimore.

As the bearer of this, I wish you all happiness in the Lord.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your obedient servant,

M. CARD. RAMPOLLA.

ROME, June 4, 1888.

The Centenary Edition.

LETTERS OF ST. ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI,

DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH,

Bishop of Saint Agatha, and Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

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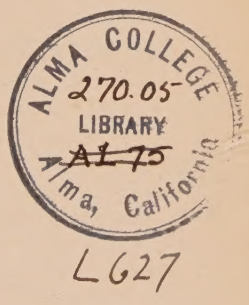

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NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO.

BENZIGER BROTHERS,

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R. WASHBOURNE,
18 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

M. H. GILL & SON,
50 UPPER O'CONNELL STREET, DUBLIN.

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2788

APPROBATION.

By virtue of the authority granted me by the Most Rev. Nicholas Mauron, Superior-General of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, I hereby sanction the publication of the work entitled "Letters," which is Vol. XVIII. of the new and complete edition in English of the works of Saint Alphonsus de Liguori, called "The Centenary Edition."

FERDINAND A. LITZ,
Sup. Prov. Baltimorensis.

BALTIMORE, MD., *August* 5, 1890.

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Fac-simile of a letter of St. Alphonsus addressed to

FATHER MAZZINI, RECTOR OF THE HOUSE AT PAGANI.

(See translation, page 147.)

V. Giesù e Maria

Pregano V. P. ova che provede il governo da cossita Corsa a Menevre in piedi l'osservanza. [illegible]
è vero che Nuova Nu Riformato fare quello, per vaga-
gione della Corsa, litigi. Ma ova bisogna Menevre
qualche Scito, altrimenti si farà l'uno alla inosser-
vanza talmente che i soggetti, sarà difficile poi, a
rimettersi alla perfetta osservanza della Regole Onde
incarico la sua coscienza, perche io sto lontano, nè
posso vedere, nè sapere la cose La Congreg.e sarà
provista avanti da Dio sinanto che vi sarà osservanza
e li soggetti si vogliano fare veram.te Santi, Altrimenti
andarà in fumo ogni cosa Colla Divina Grazia
già abbiamo due Case, e bastanni soggetti a sostenere
gli impieghi della Congr.ne, tutto Raccomandare bene
con Dio, e che ciascuno attenda alla perfez.ne e così
la Congr.ne si avanzerà e ciascheduno i soggetti, e
si farà molte cose di gloria di Dio Altrimenti
Dio ci abbandonerà, e cadera ogni cosa Lo prego
a fare scrivere questo mio Biglietto a tutti e abbado
tutti li prego a Pacelli — Giesù Cristo e Maria
V Giesù e Maria
Racc.ne a Mezzia SS.ma la sera le Miss.ne che qui avvenu
da San quel'anno, spec.te a Foggia [illegible] Diocesi
di Tuoja Pubblico V. G. ecc
Saluto D. Biase e mandi li nomi di V. G. ecc
Affmo. e Ubmo. Figlio
Alfonso de Liguori del SS. Redent

General Correspondence.

I.

BEFORE THE EPISCOPATE.

(1730 — 1762.)

PREFACE OF THE ITALIAN EDITOR.

THE lives of the saints and everything that refers to them, no matter how unimportant and common-place they may be, excite in a wonderful manner the pious curiosity of the faithful who derive great spiritual advantage from their perusal. This fact, attested by daily experience, is very beautifully expressed by St. John Chrysostom when speaking of the apostles he says: "Oh, would that we might meet with a man who could give us the history of the apostles! Not a history, however, containing only what they wrote and spoke, but one portraying for us the whole tenor of their lives, what and when they ate, when they remained at home, when they went forth into the world, what they did every day, what places they visited, what houses they frequented, what journeys they undertook by sea and by land, and all narrated with the greatest exactness, for every detail is of the greatest utility to us." (*In ep. ad Philem.*) And what is here said of the apostles by St. John Chrysostom, may be applied equally well to all the great servants of God, the slightest details of whose lives have always formed the object as well of constant research as of religious veneration. Nor is it only the faithful who take an interest in such matters, but all sensible men who admire genius, because the heroism of Christian sanctity shines with such lustre that no thinking man can fail to recognize in the saints the heroes of humanity.

It is not wonderful then that so great honor has been paid at all times and by all men to their writings, and especially to their letters or familiar epistles in which are displayed before our eyes the excellence of character and the eminent virtues

that made them the benefactors of religion, of society, and of the individual.

Feeling the full force of these considerations and confident that we should be doing a pleasing and useful work, we have undertaken to collect and to give to the public in one complete work as many letters of our holy Father St. Alphonsus as we have been able to find, many of which have never as yet appeared in print. We have chosen the present time for their publication on account of its peculiar appropriateness, for we celebrate this year the centenary of our Founder's happy death.

The letters of St. Alphonsus regarded in their complex fall naturally into four classes: 1. Letters to the religious of his own Congregation; 2. Letters of spiritual guidance; 3. Episcopal letters and ordonances; 4. Letters bearing on the publication of his works and referring to other special affairs of the saint. Taking them as a whole, we do not hesitate to say that they give us a most faithful and perfect picture of this illustrious Doctor.

Nowhere does the saint show more fully than in this correspondence, which extends over the space of a half-century, the secrets of that soul, naturally noble but so perfected by grace, as to render him like unto his divine Master. Founder of a religious Congregation, a missionary powerful in word and deed, a director experienced and enlightened, an exemplary bishop, an author of wonderful fecundity, St. Alphonsus came in contact with persons of the most diverse character, found himself face to face with great difficulties, and had to treat affairs and questions of every kind. His long career is, so to speak, mirrored in his correspondence. At one time the holy Doctor turns to his own sons, spurs them on, directs them; at another he points out to souls hungering after perfection the simplest and safest road; now as a bishop he addresses his clergy, the civil authorities and the princes of the Church; then as a theologian he treats numberless questions in the field of controversy, which are nevertheless very useful; then finally we see him as an author superintending the editions of his

numerous works. It is evident that a correspondence of this character cannot but be pleasing and interesting; for considering the abilities of the author, we expect it to contain many excellent qualities. A style simple, natural, free from all obscurity, and a moderate use of ornament, joined to a great fund of topics (or displayed in a great range of topics), show us the author confident of his strength, master of thought, as well as of expression. Then that practical wisdom, that holy, singular and characteristic gift of the saint, reveals itself on every page. Finally, what crowns the work and excites our unbounded admiration is the continual insight into the apostolic soul that dictated these letters. That burning love of souls which ever characterized the saint and which made of him a true apostle, is the formal element, is, so to speak, the very soul that vivifies the whole correspondence and all its parts. No matter whether the saint writes to his own sons or to strangers; whether he gives to persons favored by our Lord safe and gentle rules or spurs on tepid and unfaithful souls to the practice of the virtues proper to their state; whether he gently instils into the souls of the faint-hearted a filial confidence in God or shows to the scrupulous that their only means of salvation lies in obedience; no matter whether he demands justice against the guilty or implores pardon for the unfortunate; whether engaged in missions or in other works of the ministry, superintending the publication and sale of his works or praising the zeal of the publisher, everywhere and in everything we are forced to admire the apostle inflamed with zeal, *animarum zelo succensus*, the apostle who lives no longer for himself, but for Jesus Christ, the love of whom was his only aim and his glory. From this source arose that forgetfulness of self, that absence of all pretension, that true simplicity with its accompaniments, true zeal with its attendants, and which stand out in this correspondence in bolder relief than in any other work.

It must not, however, be supposed that the correspondence will on that account be monotonous and consequently less delightful reading; on the contrary, on every page we meet

with the most pleasing variety. Take for example the letters which are intended for spiritual guidance. What a richness and variety of delightful subjects! Here we find the practical solution of questions relating to prayer and to its different species, to frequent Communion, to the line of conduct to be followed in time of spiritual consolation or in time of desolation, to a choice of a state of life, to the selection of a spiritual director, etc. These and a hundred more questions are treated here, we venture to say, more clearly and more concisely than in the other works of the holy Doctor, since he had to adapt himself to a variety of persons, to their different intellectual capacity, and to their progress in the spiritual life. The director of souls and the simple child of the Church, the dweller in the cloister, and the secular, will without great study, be enabled to admire that wisdom of St. Alphonsus in guiding along the heavenly path the souls committed to his care. What a knowledge of divine things! What sweet and prudent slowness! What watchfulness in removing all obstacles to grace! What energy in urging on the negligent! What constant charity in comforting desolate souls and in aiding sufferers of all classes, by showing them the great value of tribulations!

The historical notices of so great importance in our day are as abundant as they are valuable. Not to speak of what relates to the author, whose life is here outlined in great part, or of his Institute, the different phases of which are here described, or of his diocese and its government, the great event of the eighteenth century, the furious onslaught of infidelity, the tyrannical and hypocritical measures of the Neapolitan government, especially that regalism, the sworn enemy of the holiest rights of the Church, the suppression of the Society of Jesus, the persistent and malignant assaults of Jansenism on sound Catholic doctrine, all these great events, the importance of which has not been dimmed by time, gain not a little light from remarks scattered here and there throughout the correspondence. The saint's judgment on men and things expressed in his own peculiar style — (*my concise style*, he said to his publisher, Giuseppe Remondini, in a letter dated

April 8, 1770) — will often tell the reader more than he would gain from the pages of history. Moreover, the reader will find here historical matter hitherto unknown which will serve to remove more than one difficulty and solve more than one historical problem. Church history itself cannot fail to be benefited by this work. Finally, no matter how great a man's esteem for the saint may be, he cannot gain a true knowledge of his ceaseless activity, of his services to the Church, not to mention his patience in supporting the vexations of the civil authority and the bitter attacks of enemies banded together for the ruin of the Congregation, if he remains unacquainted with the saint's correspondence.

We confidently think that the reader will share our conviction and will not accuse us of exaggeration, if he will take the trouble to verify for himself, all that we have said; this he may easily do by taking the general index as a guide.

It will not be out of place to say a few words about the authenticity of the letters. In the editions printed at Rome, 1815, at Turin, 1831, and at Naples, 1848, the whole of the correspondence is not to be found; leaving room for improvement. We need not wonder at this. The works of the saints, and especially their letters, do not all become known at the same time. We may say of their letters what the Holy Scripture says of their virtues: *Justorum semita, quasi lux splendens procedit et crescit usque ad perfectum diem.* — But the path of the just as a shining light goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day. (*Prov.* iv. 18.) Such was the case with St. Ignatius of Loyola, with St. Teresa, with St. Jane Frances Chantal, with St. Vincent of Paul and others; these letters, truly treasures, scattered and hidden, were found and collected at the time marked out by Providence for the edification of the faithful. The same happened to the letters of our saint. Having been scattered here and there during his life on account of his wide-spread correspondence, it was impossible to collect them all at one time; long and persistent research was needed to bring them to light. Some were hidden beneath the dust of libraries whence they were providentially rescued some ten years ago; a great

number had found their way into the hands of antiquaries and collectors of the autographs of celebrated men; others, finally, more than a thousand in number, having been examined by the Church in the process of the saint's beatification had been given to his numerous clients as precious relics, and had in this manner been scattered broadcast over the world. To obtain possession of these treasures, we resorted to all practices; we even called in the aid of the Catholic press to work upon the benevolence of those who either possessed such letters, or at least knew where any were to be found, in order that we might obtain at least a true copy. Our labor was not in vain; God deigned to bless it. Ecclesiastics and seculars and religious Communities responded courteously to our wishes. And here we feel it incumbent on us to thank them for their kindness, and we pray our holy Founder, to whose glory they have contributed, to grant them his choicest blessings. Nor have we neglected to write at the end of each letter the names of those who so kindly lent them, to show in this way our gratitude. We regret that we are not able to do this in every instance; for some of the letters though scrupulously authenticated by ecclesiastical authority reached our hands without any indication as to the names of their holders.

The number of the letters thus far collected convinces us that our edition surpasses by far the others in point of number, although we confess it is not so complete as we had wished to make it. The catalogue of letters drawn up for the beatification shows us that more than three hundred letters are still missing. Our wishes will some day be fulfilled, and God knows how earnestly we desire this. Again we entreat our courteous readers most earnestly and warmly to help us to fill out this void and to enable us to publish an edition in which nothing shall be wanting.

It will be scarcely necessary for us to remark that we have followed the text most scrupulously, going even so far as to leave unaltered those careless expressions which flow at times from the pen of every writer; as an excuse for this negligence we can say that St. Alphonsus never thought of their future

publication; he wrote and dictated them while overwhelmed with business affairs, concerning himself only about the substance of the letter. We thought it advisable to enclose in brackets the common Italian term for some of the words belonging to the Neapolitan dialect which might have presented some difficulty to the reader. For the sake of uniformity the dates have been placed at the beginning of the letters. As however the date is missing in more than one letter, we have endeavored with all possible care to glean the date from the matter treated; we have marked with a special sign all such letters. With the exception of these slight modifications, we may say that the letters remain exactly as they were written or dictated by the saint; we say, dictated, for from the year 1758 he required the services of an amanuensis on account of a malady contracted at that time.

"I am not answering with my own hand (thus he wrote from Nocera, August 3, of the same year), as since my last sickness my hand gives me too much trouble, ... If there be a real necessity, I force myself to write what is necessary little by little. . . . ." To this source we may ascribe the occasional omission of a name in these formulas so frequently used by him, *Live Jesus, etc.*, careless expressions, and especially needless repetitions, for we know that when he was bishop, he was often obliged to summon to his aid a simple lay-brother, the good Brother Francesco Antonio Romito.

It would have afforded us the highest satisfaction, to have been able to reproduce the whole correspondence with the original letters before our eyes, though we can say that we have a great many which we have marked: *After the original.* Although, in spite of our labors, we have not been able to obtain all the originals, we do not think that the authenticity of the letters will be affected thereby. We have found some excellent copies in the general archives, the preservation of which we owe chiefly to the immortal biographer of the holy Doctor, Father Antonio Maria Tannoia; these are marked: *After an old copy.* As for the others, with the exception of a few letters taken from the Neapolitan edition,

we have closely followed the Roman edition, as the reader will easily perceive. This latter edition, the work of the Postulator of the cause of the saint's canonization, Rev. Vincenzo Giattini, is authentic in every respect, as we have been able to compare it with a great number of the original letters. It may not be amiss to add here that though the printed text of the Roman edition is the text of St. Alphonsus, it is not, unfortunately, always the entire text; having had occasion to compare some letters with the originals, which we had at hand, we found more than one omission which the editor saw fit to make, perhaps because he did not consider the parts omitted directly conducive *to the edification, profit and spiritual advantage* of the reader, the end that he had in view in editing the letters.

We must now say a few words about the order which we have followed in the arrangement of the letters.

On account of the diversity of matter and of persons it would be difficult, not to say impossible, to give an exact classification of the letters. Seeing, however, the great utility of some such arrangement, we have endeavored to meet it by dividing the whole work into two parts, under the heading of *general correspondence* and *special correspondence*. In the first division we place all the letters of whatever import addressed by the saint to his own Sons, and to externs of every class and condition, to ecclesiastical and civil authorities, to nobles, plebeians, relatives, friends, etc., but especially to cloistered persons striving for perfection.

In the second part we shall place, first, the letters referring to the works of the holy Doctor, their publication, the reasons that induced him to write them, his method of writing, the exposition and development of his moral system, etc.; these we shall call *scientific letters;* then follow the letters written during his episcopate, under the form either of *notifications, decrees, instructions* to his clergy and through them to the people, or of *reports* of his Visitation sent to the Sacred Congregation of the Council; added to these are letters wherein he treats *ex professo* of the government of his diocese, of giving missions or exercises to

ecclesiastics, etc.; these we shall call generically *pastoral letters*.

As far as possible we have held to the chronological order, which, in our opinion, is the clearest and most natural, as it removes ambiguity, avoids repetition, and causes one to see the activity of the saint developing, as it were, before our eyes.

Finally, in order to place everything in the clearest light, we have thought it advisable to insert here and there notes throwing light upon persons and matters spoken of in the letters; the notes have been taken from most trustworthy sources.

If the reader should at times find them superfluous, especially those relating to members of our Congregation, we ask him to bear with us, as we were anxious to avail ourselves of the occasion to make honorable mention of those who, in our eyes, most deserved it.

True it is that the value of such a correspondence cannot be heightened by our poor labor, but the year in which it sees the light, adds to it a new and well-merited lustre; the year eighteen hundred and eighty-seven is the first centenary of the death of the saintly author! During the past century the spirit of St. Alphonsus has been working in the Church, and She has not forgotten to crown his name with honor. It is therefore with most joyful hearts that we bring our humble flowers to adorn the beautiful garland that decks the brow of our holy Father; we lay our poor offering, the pledge of our filial love, at the foot of his glorious tomb, imploring at the same time for ourselves, our gentle readers, and for all the devout clients of St. Alphonsus, his paternal blessing.

Rome, June 19, 1887, *Feast of our Lady of Perpetual Help.*

LETTERS OF
ST. ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI.

PART I.
General Correspondence.

LETTER I.

To Mother Angiola del Cielo[1] and to the Nuns of Scala.

The saint gives various exhortations, general as well as particular, and recommends to the prayers of the nuns one of his penitents, who was greatly troubled in spirit.

Praised be Jesus, Joseph, Mary, and Teresa!

NAPLES, October 29, 1730.

May Jesus and Mary always possess our hearts! Finish Thy work, O Lord! and take entire possession of our

[1] Mother Angiola del Cielo, called in the world Maria de Vito, was born at Naples in the year 1700. At the age of 19, burning with the desire to consecrate herself to the Spouse of virgins, she in company with her sister entered a conservatory which had recently been founded in the little town of Scala. Her great piety and the soundness of her judgment were such that, though still very young, she was considered worthy to fill the responsible position of mistress of novices, and in the year 1729 she was elected Superior of the Community. Understanding, however, from certain supernatural revelations that another Rule, the principle aim of which should be the continual imitation of our Saviour Jesus Christ, was to be substituted for the Rule hitherto observed, Mother Angiola employed all her energy to bring about this change, since the above-mentioned

hearts; we are willing to lose them, and may we find them no more, if only they are in Thy hands, for then they are in good hands.

I received your first letters on the feast of my patroness St. Teresa: it was a consolation for me only to see the envelope, for it told me who had written those letters. I did not write before, because I have been very much occupied, especially with the mission which is being held at Naples, and which is still to be concluded; added to this, I have, as you see, many correspondents to answer.

Now I am writing, and I wish to tell you that though some time has elapsed since my stay at Scala, my remembrance of you is as vivid as if I had departed only yesterday. If this should appear to you to be saying too much, ask our Lord to make me forget you; because, as far as I am concerned, I hope that memory will ever be the same; since, far from drawing me away from God, it serves to unite me more closely to him. I wish you also to know for your common consolation that the words of your letters are like so many arrows that wound me with the love of

revelations had received the approval of St. Alphonsus during the spiritual exercises given by him in September, 1730. The following year, in the month of May, the conservatory of Scala adopted the new Rule, taking at the same time the name of the Most Holy Saviour. Thus was most solemnly begun the Institute known to-day by the name of the nuns of the Most Holy Redeemer or Redemptoristines, whose Rule received the approbation of the Holy See in 1750.

Mother Angiola was frequently re-elected Superior, so that we might almost say she always presided over that fervent Community. She enjoyed the good fortune of having for upwards of ten years the Venerable Gennaro Sarnelli as her spiritual director, and the numerous letters addressed to her, which are now in our possession, show us clearly the height of sanctity to which she attained.

This holy religious, whose memory is blessed among the children of St. Alphonsus, died a holy death, in the year 1782.

God. Courage then, Sisters! let us give our hearts entirely to Him who is knocking for admittance, and let us banish from them everything that is not for God. In order to give ourselves to him without reserve, let us endeavor to go out of ourselves, so that God may find no obstacle when he comes to take possession of our hearts.

Up to the present time, as I have already told you, I have been paying up for the agreeable time that I spent at Scala; I am as well as one can expect during the storm; I am in such a state that at times I can see neither heaven nor earth, and I find within myself a dark abyss, *ubi nullus ordo, sed terribilis horror inhabitat*, — where no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth. [*Job*, x. 22.] May the will of God be ever done! and if it be for the greater glory of God that I should be damned, may the will of God be done! This I say in all sincerity. Pray to God for me, that I may not offend him, since it would not be for his greater glory that I should offend him. O Lord! here I am; hell would be little for me.

Mgr. Falcoia[1] has written to me in terms so affectionate, that he has entirely captivated me; he did not mention when he would return, but I understood it was to be about the 20th of November.

My dear Mother, I beg you most earnestly to pray and to have prayers said for my poor penitent Maria; I know no longer what to do or what to say to her. She does not hear me, she does not understand me. The more I say, the more troubled she becomes; hence she is also tempted to leave me. I have told her that she may go to whom she wishes, but I see that it is only a temptation. She is tempted almost continually to commit suicide. It appears to her that there is no God, and that if there be a God, he

1 Tommaso Falcoia, a member of the Order of the Pious Workers, was the spiritual director of the nuns of Scala. He was at that time at Rome, where during the same month he was consecrated bishop.

hates her and she hates him; moreover, it seems to her that this hatred which she bears towards God does not afflict her, and this thought only increases her misery. Her anguish, the reason and source of which she cannot explain, is so great that she has almost gone out of her mind. Only yesterday, while she was kneeling in the confessional, her pain was so excessive that it brought on a kind of swoon, which rendered her speechless. I tell you all this in order to excite your compassion for this poor desolate soul, who, I must say, consoles me by her prompt obedience even in things the most difficult which I have imposed upon her in order to try her. I ask you to pray for her for at least three days, and to recommend her to the prayers of the Community at holy Communion; moreover, have the Litany of our Lady said, that God may give me light and her strength to obey and to suffer this great affliction. If she does not throw off the yoke of obedience, I hope that she will give great glory to God; but there is need of much prayer and assistance. Pray then for her, as God has perhaps made me acquainted with you in order to obtain your prayers in behalf of this soul. And she in her turn will pray for you as well as she can.

Now, my dear Sisters, do not grow negligent in praying for me. I, who am a priest, called to save souls, should be filled with zeal for the glory of God: pray that I may give him pleasure, and then if he wishes to send me to hell, may his will be done! I shall appear importunate by repeating so often, Pray for me; because I fear that as time goes on you may grow cold. You must know that the very thought that you are praying for me gives me courage, and spurs me on to give pleasure to God, as it seems to me almost impossible that God can refuse to hear you when you pray earnestly for some soul, and say to him as St. Teresa was accustomed to say: Lord, we wish to obtain this for our friend. How discouraged I should feel if you

should cease to pray for me! I beg you, if that should ever happen, to leave me in ignorance of the fact, that I may flatter myself with the thought that you are still praying for me. It would be a very great trial for me to find that you had forgotten me in your prayers. I for my part never forget you in my prayers, poor as they may be: to tell the truth, you share in a great part of my unworthy prayers. It seems to me that I pray more for you than for myself: for, as regards myself, I endeavor to be resigned if God wishes me to remain in the lowest grade of sanctity; but as for you, I will not rest until I see you all like Seraphim.

From time to time I turn towards your home and exclaim: O ye enamoured souls! love Jesus. Love him, then; do not lose a moment of time; you can give him the greatest pleasure. Remember that he loves you without ceasing; he loses no time. Speak to him often, especially when you find yourselves before him in the Blessed Sacrament; speak to him of love rather than of anything else: for he enjoys the conversation about love more than any other subject. Love Jesus: love above all his Sacred Heart and his divine will. Do not trouble yourselves as to whether you are among the predestined or the reprobate, among the abandoned or among the favorites of God. Unite your will with the will of God, and then say: O Lord! Thy pleasure and Thy glory are sufficient for me. Let this be our only aim to glorify God in ourselves; after that let disgrace and abandonment, crosses and trials, storms and darkness, desolation and despondency, come upon us; let them come as often as it pleases God to send them. He remains the same good God, worthy of all our love; may he then be blessed and loved forever!

Let us always speak in this manner, and then place all our confidence in God, for this is what he earnestly desires. I beseech our Lord to cause your hearts to burn in that

furnace of love, of which St. Teresa speaks, and in which love is the torture of hearts.

My heart, confide and hope:
The tempest too is able oft
To bring the bark to port.[1]

Do me the favor to omit henceforward in your letters the title *Most Illustrious*, as I am not a bishop.

Don Giovanni[2] recommends himself to the prayers of all.

You may read the foregoing in public; but the following lines you will please read yourself, and then read to those particular Sisters to whom I am writing privately.

My penitent is writing to Sister Maria Colomba.

In the first place I address you not as Mother, but as Maria Angiola, and I wish to say to you: My daughter (I call you so because you call me Father), I am deeply grateful to you for whatever you do for me. I know that you not only pray for me yourself, but that you also recommend me very often to the prayers of the Community. To judge from your manner of acting, I should say that you are a woman of deeds rather than of words. You cannot imagine what great pleasure your conduct affords me.

Do not forget to pray for me; I never forget you nor will I ever do so, I assure you. I am no friend of twaddle, but I speak as I really feel. I recommend you to God in a special manner not only at Mass, but also in all my humble prayers; the grace which I ask from God for myself I seek to obtain for you also.

You are a guiding light to me, as I am certain that God reposes in your heart and wishes never more to leave it.

[1] Cor mio, confida e spera:
Che la tempesta ancor,
Condune sa talor
La nave in porto.

[2] Giovanni Mazzini was one of the first companions of the saint.

Gratitude, as you well know, even towards our neighbor, is not displeasing to God. Your soul is very, very dear to God. It rests with you to inflame me with the love of God: it will be sufficient if you speak only one tender word to him when you recline upon his bosom after holy Communion.

The fears you express with regard to Maria Colomba fill me with great consolation: it encourages me to tell her that she must surrender her whole will to God, for he desires this. I conclude by blessing all your affections, thoughts, words, deeds, and in fact everything that is yours.

I forgot to send you that souvenir. I send you in this letter the verse: *Dio mio, ecc.* — My God, etc.[1]

I send to Maria Cherubina her prayer: *Gesù mio, ecc.* — My Spouse, etc. Tell her from me that sorrow for sin is not necessary for one who has been already pardoned by God. I wish her to become inflamed with love, to become foolish for love, and finally to die of love for him who became a fool and died for love of us. Let her do this, and I, on my part, will take upon myself the responsibility of rendering an account of her soul; tell her that I bless her.

To Sister Maria Felice: Please tell her, I shall continue to offer her will to God, and that she must continue to do the same in my regard. I send her also the little prayer: *My Jesus, etc.*, which she has asked for.

To Sister Maria Rosa: Our dear Lord wishes her to become a saint, but without any delay. St. Rose became a saint and died the death of a saint while still very young.

Tell good Sister Maria Raffaella[2] that I send her the

[1] These little remembrances were written on separate small slips of paper; they have all been lost.

[2] Sister Maria Raffaella was the sister of Mother Angiola del Cielo, and she it was who in the year 1767 founded the monastery of the nuns of the Most Holy Redeemer, at St. Agatha of the Goths.

following message: My dear Sister, I rejoice to hear that you have become blind and deaf; I would that you were as I desire to see you. I am delighted to hear again: *Amo, e pure non so che ne sento amore.* — I love, and yet I know not what I love. Whether you are far or near, united or separated, love, love the adorable will of God; do not trouble yourself to find out whether you love or do not love, whether you belong to God or not. Seek neither consolation nor light; do not strive to come forth out of your darkness and misery; everything happens according to the sweet will of God. For example, it is the will of God that you pray for me; abstain then from doing so if you can! Do not give yourself any further thought as to whether your prayer helps me or not. It is certain that if you make a saint of me, I shall be better able to assist you, as you well observe. I shall send the message for you to Mamma,[1] through my other Mamma, St. Teresa; I know that Mamma will listen to it with the greatest pleasure. May Jesus and Mary bless you!

To Sister Maria Michele: Tell her that if my *imprecations*[2] were realized, she would have to be pitied; and let her know that I shall not cease to pray for her until I learn that she is fairly burning alive with the love of God. I wish she would obtain from her Spouse, who I know loves her dearly, the same *imprecation* for me. I send her my blessing.

To Sister Maria Eletta: Ask her to keep her word, as I always recommend her to God.

To Sister Maria Emmanuele: I wish her to belong entirely to God before she dies.

To Sister Maria Giuseppa: I do not know whether you

[1] Our saint was accustomed to employ this tender epithet when speaking of the most holy Mother of God.

[2] The word *imprecations* is here used ironically.

delivered my message to her, and whether she has promised to pray for me. Remember me again to her.

To Sister Maria Cristina: She ought to thank our dear Lord for all the lights that he has vouchsafed her; let her be careful to follow them. I thank her for her kind remembrance of me, and ask her to continue to pray for me, as I never forget her in my prayers.

To Sister Maria Evangelista: Tell her that in accordance with the promise that I made her, I recommend her very often to God: I hope that she, on her part, will keep her word. Let her also know that her Spouse is a jealous Spouse; he wishes to have her all his own.

To Sister Battista: I shall beseech our Lord to imprison her in his divine Heart.

You may tell all in particular, if they should ask, that I always remember them in my prayers, since I pray for all; tell them not to forget me.

If it should happen that you have to write to me before Christmas, especially if you wish to speak to me about Mgr. Falcoia, or about your own affairs, please write before the middle of December; for I believe about that time we shall have to set out for a distant mission, a journey of some eight days from Naples.

May God be our all! Praised be Jesus and Mary!

Mamma has begun to finish her work in my regard: this has induced me to compose a little canticle in her honor, which I now send you. You may read it to the others.

I am, your most devoted and humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI, a wretched sinner.

After an old copy.

LETTER 2.

To a Community of Nuns.

Books sent. — Various counsels. — Exhortations to love Jesus and Mary.

[The year 1731.]

My beloved Sisters in Jesus and Mary, praised and blessed forever be Jesus, Joseph, Mary, and Teresa!

Chains! ciliciums! I send you a good supply of books, which will do more to make you holy than chains and ciliciums. I have sent you eight books for meditation. You will please make three divisions of all the books that you receive: one for meditation, one for private reading in your cell, and one for the reading at table.

With regard to meditation, you may make use of one book in the morning and of another during the day. Choose any one that pleases you: they are all excellent.

After you have finished that meditation book on the presence of God, I wish you to begin the book called "Motives for Loving God."[1] It would please me very much were you to make your morning meditation, for the most part, on the Passion of our Saviour, using for that purpose the little book, "Meditations on the Passion," by Da Ponte, or one by Spinola. On the feasts of our Lady or of the saints, take Spinola.

When you make your meditations from the book "Motives for Loving God," divide a point into three parts; do the same with the meditation on the Passion.

For private spiritual reading I send you eleven books, which Mother Superior will distribute among you; let them

[1] "Motives for Loving God," explained in meditations taken from the works of several authors of the Society of Jesus, work published by P. Jacopo Sanvitale, S. J.

be circulated among all the Sisters in such a manner that each one will have the pleasure of reading them all.

I have sent you six lives of saints for the reading in the refectory; they will last a long time, and when you have finished them, begin to read them anew. I do not wish you by any means to give up reading at table in the morning P. Marchese's[1] little work on the Madonna, which I understand you have. As for the rest, you may read any life.

Pay attention to what I am now going to say (I have already called the attention of the nuns of Scala to this point and they have obeyed me; I forgot to tell it to you before): in the reading at table, be extremely careful to read slowly and to observe the necessary pauses; for otherwise the reading cannot be understood and the listeners grow weary; let it be loud enough for all to hear. Remember this, for if when I arrive I find that you have not obeyed me, I shall scold you without fail. I have spoken with P. Sparano; he has conceded you the privilege of receiving holy Communion every Saturday in honor of our Lady.

Well now, do you want anything else? You see now that I have not forgotten you, and that I have been thinking of your welfare; try to forget me, if you have the heart to do so. Do not omit to recommend my poor penitent Maria[2] every day to the Blessed Virgin; she is at present plunged in the very depths of misery. Ask Jesus to give her strength to endure this awful visitation, and pray to him for me.

I wish to make another remark with regard to the reading, and that is, that you are free to use for private spiritual reading the books destined for table reading, and

[1] A sacred diary for devout clients of Mary, for every day in the year, by P. Francesco Marchese, of the Oratory at Rome.

[2] Mention is made of her in the preceding letter.

those marked for private spiritual reading may be read in the refectory; do as you see fit.

Love Jesus and Mary, love them with all your heart, for they reveal themselves to those that strive to know them.

Love and be happy; he who loves so good a God should never allow dark and gloomy thoughts to enter his heart. Hence I do not wish to see you omit the recreation for any reason whatever; and if anything should ever happen to disturb the joy and harmony of recreation (which I hope will never be the case), let each do her utmost to restore cheerfulness and peace.

Ah! my dear daughters, if you only knew how Jesus loves you, how he always thinks of you and of your welfare, you could no longer live, no, you would die through the intensity of your love. If, then, you do not die of love, live for love; become fools for the love of Jesus, sigh after and desire that adorable Spouse who is so worthy of all our love. You have chosen him from among all for your Spouse; but he had already chosen you from all eternity to be his beloved spouses. Of whom then will you dare to think, if not of Jesus? whom can you love, if not Jesus? Oh, give all your thoughts and affections to Jesus! give them to him without reserve, and he will become entirely yours.

Always have a great devotion to Mamma Mary: in order to induce her to favor you; love her, praise her, honor her; let her sweet name be ever on your lips. Believe me, she loves you most tenderly. Show yourselves grateful by corresponding to her love. Devotion to Mary is a sure pledge of Paradise.

And now do not forget me; I assure you I do not ask you as a mere matter of form to pray for me to Jesus and Mary: I speak from my heart and mean what I say. Yes, pray for me, as you have promised, especially after holy Communion that I may always do the will of God; and

when you pray for me, do not forget my poor penitent, to whom I have already promised your prayers. We shall remember you in our prayers.

Assist me in this storm, where I am in continual danger of losing my God.

But you will never lose him, no, never, whilst you are his and he is yours. Do you wish for more? I believe that God can be sufficient for you.

May Jesus, Joseph, and Mary be praised and blessed for all eternity!

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI, a vile sinner.

After the original which is in the possession of Mgr. Raffaele Carbone, at Naples.

LETTER 3.

To the Benedictine Nuns of Polignano.

(IN PUGLIA.)

He congratulates them on having been freed, through the assistance of the Blessed Virgin, from the molestations of the demons, and exhorts them to show their gratitude.

[NAPLES, September 19, 1732.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

My beloved daughters in Jesus and Mary: Our Lord knows the consolation that your affectionate letter, informing me of the favor received from Mary, afforded me. I read it to the Superior of the Congregation,[1] Canon Torni, and he has retained it in order to read it before the assembled Congregation. Beginning with to-day, you must love Mary with new fervor, in a new manner. On Saturdays let each one do something more than usual — one by increasing the number of her vocal prayers and her acts of love, and

[1] This Congregation referred to was an association of diocesan missionaries, called the association of *apostolic missions*, of which St. Alphonsus was always a member.

another by seeking out new mortifications and sufferings. In order to commemorate this grace and to prevent all new attacks of the demons, have some devotion performed every day — either one in honor of the sorrows of Jesus or some other suitable devotion; for if you show yourselves ungrateful, the demons may return. And let a common fast on bread and water for those who are able to observe it be strictly kept on the anniversary of that memorable day, the 13th of August. But the greatest pleasure you can give to Mary is to love Jesus devotedly, who has granted this favor in order to be more loved by you. Think that Jesus, that Prisoner of love, has passed so many lonely nights without being visited by you, prevented as you were by your fear of the beast. Now that you are free you must make up for lost time. I ask the abbess to be kind enough to grant permission to all those Sisters who may wish to pray at night before their Spouse in the Blessed Sacrament. I beg her also to promote frequent Communion in order that the poor panting hinds may quench their thirst at the fountain of that dear Saviour who is the only love of our hearts. If any one should desire to communicate daily, I beg the abbess to offer no opposition; let her not scruple to give permission as often as the confessor gives his consent. One Communion is at times worth more than a year of prayer. If any one should remain imperfect, and should show no signs of wishing to amend, it would be well to deprive her of holy Communion.

Now I wish you to recommend me to Jesus and Mary with the greatest fervor every day, for that important matter,[1] tending to the greater glory of God, of which I have already spoken to you, is about to be settled. As

[1] Reference is here made to the foundation of the Congregation of the Most Holy Saviour, which in the year 1749 received the approbation of Benedict XIV., under the title of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

soon as it has been decided I shall let you know, for you have assisted me greatly by your prayers; but you must still continue to aid me. Offer up a holy Communion at least every week for the success of this project, in order that all may be done for the greater glory of God.

I never forget you; I recommend you to Jesus Christ very often during the day. Greet Monsignor for me (for I congratulate him also on the favor received), and your Father Confessor; ask him to pray for me. Live Jesus, Joseph, Mary, and Teresa! The feast of my dear St. Teresa is at hand; celebrate a novena or at least a triduum. Tell Sister Maria Francesca not to forget her agreement, as I do not forget it; please say the same to Sister Maria Agnes.

A miserable sinner and most tender Father.

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI.

After the original preserved in the monastery of the Benedictine Nuns at Polignano.

LETTER 4.

To Tommaso Falcoia, Bishop of Castellammare, his Spiritual Director.

He entreats Falcoia to give him permission to leave Naples in order that he may found the Institute of the Most Holy Saviour at Scala.

[October, 1732.]

My dear Father, for charity's sake, make haste, for I am dying with the desire to set out; send for me immediately, withdraw the command that binds me to Naples. Don Giovanni Battista[1] [di Donato] is also energetic and zealous. See what obstacles the devil is throwing up to prevent the speedy beginning of our work! Let us begin immediately, for they amount to nothing; all will succeed admirably.

1 This priest was one of the first companions of St. Alphonsus.

This is the second last day of the spiritual exercises, and I am to speak on our Mamma Mary. Pray for me constantly, yes, constantly; again, make haste, make haste, for the glory and praise of Jesus and Mary.[1]

Quoted by Tannoia, "Life of St. Alphonsus," Book i. Chapter xx.

[1] Our readers will thank us for giving here a sketch of the life of Mgr. Falcoia, the holy prelate and zealous apostle, whose name occurs so often in the following letters. He was born on the 16th of May, 1663. Having spent his youth happily in the acquisition of virtue, and in the study of the humanities, he felt himself drawn to a life of perfection. Following the advice of that venerable and saintly man, Antonio Torres, he at the age of twenty turned his back upon the world, and dedicated himself entirely to God and to the salvation of souls in the zealous Congregation of the Pious Workers.

Scarcely ordained priest, he was considered worthy to be sent to Rome in company with that great servant of God, Ludovico Sabbatini, in order to found there the first house of the Institute. He spent there twenty years, carrying out many works conducive to the glory of God, and to the salvation of souls. After his return to Naples, he was called upon to fill the highest and most difficult offices of the Congregation which he did with the greatest care and diligence, working, however, at the same time as a fervent and untiring missionary. Here too, as in Rome, and wherever he appeared, he drew all hearts to himself by the odor of his virtues. His spirit of prayer, of mortification, his zeal for the salvation of souls, and, above all, his earnest desire to copy as closely as possible the example of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, endeared him to all who knew him.

God now wished to place this great light upon the candlestick, to illumine the Church; he was accordingly selected to rule the diocese of Castellammare, which position he retained up to the day of his death; all his thoughts were concentrated upon the discharge of his duties by word and deed, God aiding and confirming his works by signs and wonders as frequent as they were extraordinary.

But the greatest glory of Falcoia was to have been chosen by God to form and guide the illustrious Apostle and Doctor of modern times, St. Alphonsus. In fact, the saint had him as director from the 24th of August 1732 to the end of Falcoia's life, and he

LETTER 5.

To the Same.

He relates to him his troubles, and conjures him not to abandon him.

[At the beginning of March, 1733.]

. . . . . Canon Torni has written to me that the Congregation has decided to take from me the chaplaincy, and

surrendered himself so entirely into his hands that he bound himself by vow to obey him. He depended on him in everything, especially in the foundation of the Institute, and in the manifold contradictions to which the work gave rise. The fatherly solicitude of the loving and prudent director was equal to the filial confidence of his disciple. He consoled St. Alphonsus in all his afflictions, and inspired him with courage, telling him that though the Congregation was as yet as small as a grain of mustard seed, yet the time would come when it would be spread throughout the world.

We shall select only a few among many beautiful instances of this. On the 31st of July, 1733, he wrote to St. Alphonsus: "Happy we who have been selected, for we by our humiliations, fatigue and suffering have to bear the triumphal chariot of divine glory through the whole world. Great courage then, my dear Alphonsus!

Scalpri salubris ictibus
Et tunsione plurima,
Fabri polita malleo
Hanc saxa molem construunt."

[Many a blow and biting sculpture
Polished well those stones elect,
In their places now compacted
By the heavenly architect.]

On the 28th of July, of the following year, he wrote the following words: "Do not trouble yourself about anything else, neither about the work, nor about yourself who have been chosen by the divine Majesty as the principal instrument for the erection of the new edifice, and for carrying his name among the peoples and kingdoms." He expressed the very same sentiments on his deathbed when in a spirit of prophecy he said of the new Congregation: *This work comes from God, and it will spread like the flowers of the field.*

to deprive me of membership;[1] but the Cardinal has ordained that nothing should be done in this matter without his command.[2] I have written to his Eminence expressing to him my thanks, and also to the Canon; the latter tells me that he could not do anything more in my behalf. . . . . .

O my Father! how painful it is for me to associate with D. Vincenzo [Mannarini].[3] I have experienced this these past days, and it is only the love of Jesus Christ that can render such a situation possible. . . . .

I thank God for the strength that he gives me to endure these storms (and what is worse my domestic storms), so that I may resist and may not lose courage. This is what I have gained for myself after having, as every one knows, renounced so much, incurring thereby the displeasure of my family, of my friends, and of the archbishop, upon whom I have turned my back to please God. Still you encourage me to put my confidence in God, even though all my companions should desert me. Ah, my Father, do not abandon me! for without you what could I do? Command, and I will obey. . . . . .

I send you a plan of the Rules, which we have agreed upon. Have pity on me. . . . . .

Quoted by Tannoia, Book ii. Chapters iii. and iv.

Shortly after he departed this life with every mark of sanctity, and predestination on the 20th of April, 1743.

We possess more than one hundred letters written by Falcoia to St. Alphonsus, but very few of those written by the saint to his director. There is good reason to believe that when these letters passed into the hands of St. Alphonsus after the death of Falcoia, he destroyed them in a spirit of humility.

[1] The saint was a member of the Congregation of the Apostolic Missions, which, as a reward for his indefatigable labors, had given him a chaplaincy.

[2] The Congregation disapproving of the saint's undertaking had decided upon his expulsion.

[3] One of his first companions, who opposed his Rule and his work in order to embrace a new Institute.

LETTER 6.

To Sister Maria Celeste Crostarosa,[1] Nun of the Congregation of the Most Holy Saviour at Scala.

Sorrow which he feels at seeing her so deficient in humility. He excuses himself for having reprimanded her rather harshly.

[The month of March, 1733.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Celeste, I am answering your last letter, which I received at the same time as that of Mgr. Falcoia, and I tell you that if you are right I am not wrong; for I have not been able to banish from my mind the message of Don Vincenzo [Mannarini], and what was said by Don Silvestro [Tosquez]. When they arrive you may ask them. Still I believe that the Lord has permitted all this to happen for our greater good; judging from what Monsignor writes to me and from what I hear of Don Silvestro, affairs are now in the very best condition. The latter continues to remain on intimate terms as formerly. There is, however, one thorn

[1] Maria Celeste Crostarosa was born at Naples, October 11, 1697. It was she who, in consequence of a revelation, suggested to St. Alphonsus the plan for the foundation of the Congregation of the Most Holy Saviour. Falling under the influence of Don Vincenzo Mannarini, and especially of Don Silvestro Tosquez, after the foundation of the Institute, she began to withdraw from the spiritual guidance of Mgr. Falcoia. She, moreover, began to entertain certain ideas with regard to the establishment of a Rule entirely at variance with those held by St. Alphonsus and by Mgr. Falcoia himself. In conseqence of this, Providence permitted her to be dismissed from the convent. After leaving Scala, she reformed a conservatory of maidens at Nocera. Having been called to Foggia, she founded there another conservatory for the daughters of the nobility, which is at present, under the title of the Most Holy Saviour, a source of great edification for that town. She died with the reputation of heroic virtue, September 14, 1755, and her body remained in a wonderful state of preservation for many years.

that pierces my heart and causes me great anguish: it deprives me too of my night's sleep, and it is, my dear Celeste, the thought of you. I see that during this trouble between us you have not uttered one sentiment breathing humility.

Especially in your last letter I noticed how you address me and how you sign yourself; I perceived, too, how little you care whether I believe you or not; now, do not tell me that you are praying to God for me, as if I were already a reprobate, and that you end your letter: I remain in the Heart of Jesus. My dear Celeste, could the most imperfect soul write in a different tone? I know that you bear me no ill-will; but judging from the altered style of your letter, it appears to me that you do retain some ill-feeling towards me. I do not say that I deserve to see you humble yourself before me; I confess that I am not worthy even to sit at your feet, for I know your life and I know my own. But I do not on this account despair of loving Jesus as you do; He will grant me this in his infinite mercy. What I wish to say is that I should like to see in a soul so united with God and so favored by him, as is your soul, the profoundest humility; for the greater our humility is, the more intimate is our union with God: the one is ever in proportion to the other. Humility, however, does not consist at all in saying: *I am a wretch, I deserve much worse than this;* no, it consists in having a low opinion of one's self, and in knowing how to humble one's self most before him who most despises us. I would have desired this humility for you, even though I should have had reason to ask for other things; but up to the present time I have not seen it in you, and this is the thorn that torments me. Understand now that this is the secret cause of my affliction and the reason why I could not approve of your conduct, as I wrote to the Mother Superior before receiving your letter.

It is true I may have written harshly, and perhaps too harshly, but I did so relying on past experience; for whenever, heretofore, I addressed you in that manner, it resulted in great profit for your soul. For it is always salutary for a soul favored by God to meet with humiliations; and the more you experience from me, the more nearly you approach that which Christ has marked out for you. You may rest assured I have done everything for a good purpose; I feel no remorse for what I have done, for I really believed that your naturally high spirit, relying on its own judgment, deserved to be treated in this manner for its own good, and to cause it to be submissive in all things. I do not speak here of your will (for, as I have already written to you, I have not condemned you on account of your will, but rather for having followed your own judgment). Besides, it appeared to me that I had hitherto effected nothing with kind words. Understand now that in matters that relate to the welfare of the Institute I can quickly rid myself of your intrigues by laying the whole matter before Falcoia; however, I have not done so, as it appears to me to be a species of treachery to reveal the situation to Falcoia, when I myself, though troubled and disgusted, can apply the remedy by writing to you. You cannot imagine what great pain it causes me to treat any one harshly, especially as I believe that more may be done by gentleness than by harshness.

If, perchance, through want of reflection and through indiscreet zeal, I have gone beyond the bounds of moderation, and you consequently feel yourself offended, I beg your pardon now and always, and beseech you to pardon me expressly. If I were allowed, I would kiss your feet a thousand times for having so treated a beloved spouse of Jesus Christ; if Mgr. Falcoia gives me permission, I will beg your pardon publicly, before all. But still I want to see you as humble as I wish you to be.

And is my soul, then, of so much importance to you? [1] Ah, my dear Celeste, do not speak in that strain to me, for it sounds like great ingratitude: the union of our souls in Jesus Christ is too intimate for that. Do you not know that the interests of your soul have become mine? And this is not my work, but God's work; I must desire the same perfection for you that I wish to obtain for myself.

I am seeking for reasons to excuse you, and to calm my alarm at seeing your want of humility, and I am trying to flatter myself that you have not considered this matter sufficiently. Perhaps you have a very good end in view in treating me thus; but the thorn still continues to torment me. If during this time you have had a good end in view, I beg you to let me know it as quickly as possible, and thus to allay my fears.

On my part, I promise to make a special memento for you every day at Mass until I become calm; I began this morning, and I prayed very hard to our Lord that he might grant you perfect humility. And you must ask the same for me from Jesus Christ, that I may no longer resist the allurements of God, who wishes to have me entirely his. I have resisted only too often in the past; that time is gone; I wish with all my heart to give myself entirely, yes entirely, to Jesus Christ, and I desire the same for you; but without humility neither you nor I shall attain anything. Henceforward, study to mortify me in every possible way, and this you should do the more readily in order not to allow me to suspect that you are disgusted. Don Silvestro Tosquez is coming; I hope that all will redound to the glory of God. I do not call you daughter that you may not think I am arrogating to myself what is not mine.

Praised be Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

My dear Celeste, it is not true that I said that Don

[1] The Sister had written to the saint these cutting remarks.

Silvestro is deceived; I do not remember ever having spoken those words.

After an old copy.

LETTER 7.

To the same Sister.

He explains the conditions under which the new Institute can prosper; he reproves her for withdrawing from the spiritual guidance of Mgr. Falcoia, and points out the dangers that threaten her on this account.

[End of March, 1733.]

Praised be Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Celeste, my beloved Sister in Jesus Christ and our Mother Mary, I had asked you not to answer me; but since you have thought fit to honor me with an answer, I beg you to read this letter and then follow the inspiration of God. But read it with resignation, without seeking for a reply to what you read; for if you read with an inclination to contradict, you will find an abundance of reasons for replying, but you will never discover the truth. Heretics have found reasons for opposing the Church, even against holy Scripture. Read then, I pray you, this letter, and spend three days in prayer entirely resigned and with the most perfect indifference, without writing to me or without so much as noting down anything for an answer; then do as you please.

And now, since you require fidelity from me, I ask the same of you; I do not allow you to show this letter of mine or to mention its contents to any one — neither to Don Silvestro nor to others. You already believe that I know all; and so if you really desire not to be defended and praised before men, but to please God by investigating the truth in order to embrace it, allow me, my dear Sister Celeste, to speak frankly and to place the truth before you. I seek nothing but the glory of God and the welfare of your

soul, which I so ardently desire. Let us separate the interests of your soul from those of the Institute.

And now let us speak of the affairs of your soul. Tell me, Celeste, why have you left Mgr. Falcoia, who is so saintly and so enlightened, as you yourself have often told me? You know that God himself has given him to you as your director; he has guided you so admirably for many years, that, prostrate on the ground, you ought unceasingly to return thanks to God and to him. What defect have you now perceived in him? Has he perhaps cast you into an abyss? Have you left him because he disturbed you by humbling and thwarting you? But, my dear Sister, do you not see that this course is absolutely necessary to conquer your high spirit, and to prevent you from becoming attached to your own judgment? This is a fault that was perceived in you not only by Mgr. Falcoia, but also by Don Bartolomeo Carace,[1] and by others who were acquainted with you. It is a fault, of which St. Philip Neri has said that there can be nothing more dangerous in the spiritual life; and St. John Chrysostom assures us that there is more danger for a saint in following such a course than for any other person. Another saint tells us that he who confides in himself has no need of demons to tempt him. Who has approved of the step you have taken in leaving Falcoia? Have you perhaps received lights from God? Are the effects, that joyous calmness, etc., sufficient signs of the correctness of your step? And who has approved of these lights and of this sense of security and peace? Is it that penitent who for eight years labored under a delusion which, judged by its good effects, seemed to her confessor to be from God, and which was afterwards discovered by Father Collelis, as we read in his life, to be nothing else but a delusion?

[1] Don Bartolomeo Carace had been the first spiritual director of the nun.

The most experienced and cautious masters of the spiritual life can be deceived on this point, and you wish to have certainty in the matter by taking counsel with yourself? But has perhaps Don Silvestro [Tosquez] given his approbation? If you suspect Falcoia because he has humbled you, you have greater reason to mistrust the judgment of Don Silvestro, who, as you know, places you above St. Teresa, and sings your praises everywhere, even at Vienna. [1] He approves of everything, even of his entire dependence on you — a thing, which above all others, a spiritual director should guard against, if he wishes to guide a soul properly and to keep it humble.

O my dear Celeste! how Don Silvestro has caused you to lose the spirit of humility! how he has aided you in wedding yourself, so to speak, to your own judgment! See to what lengths you have gone, asserting openly in your convent that one is not obliged to obey a command of the Superior given *sub mortali* — under pain of mortal sin! My Celeste, what Doctor ever taught such nonsense — that it is not a mortal sin for one who has made the vow of obedience to disobey the command of a Superior in a grave matter? By a grave matter we are to understand either a great evil or something that may have evil consequences; we must always suppose this, for the Superior before giving a command examines the matter carefully. It savors too much of arrogance when a woman who has made no studies wishes to contradict in this matter those whom the Church has placed over us as teachers.

Ah! where is that Celeste whom I knew of old? How has this ruin been effected? Oh! I feel the pangs of death whenever I think of this. Who has so fascinated you? Where is that former prompt and edifying obedience to Superiors? Where is that beautiful spirit of humility which

[1] Don Silvestro Tosquez had a brother who filled a very high position at the Imperial Court of Vienna.

caused you to desire to be trodden under foot and despised by all?

Now, however, having abandoned, as it were, the practice of obedience, you are endeavoring to gain the esteem and approval of all, under the vain pretence of seeking the glory of God. God stands in no need of your self-defence to promote his glory. When he sees you truly humble, and the more he sees you humbled, the more readily will he undertake to defend you and your work. You already understand what I mean.

Let me tell you that Don Silvestro, whose fine teaching on obedience perhaps it is which you have followed, in matters of doctrine is wrong-headed, and very much so. I have heard him say that on the fasting days of the Church people are not allowed to eat until about three o'clock, and that the customary collation in the evening cannot be taken — thus presuming to condemn so many religious Orders and so many saintly men who practised the contrary. He has given utterance to other false doctrines in points of Moral Theology which I shall not mention here. It is sufficient to know that he had the boldness to assert, as you perhaps have already heard, that all who were under the spiritual direction of Falcoia were damned. Hence it is certain that the vision that induced you to leave Falcoia was a delusion, and if you consulted a thousand unbiassed theologians they would all tell you the very same thing, although it should have sufficed for you when Falcoia, who was at that time your spiritual director, pronounced it to be such. Tell me, Celeste, was it possible that your vision could be an illusion? At least you ought to have a reasonable doubt about it when a St. Teresa, in the account that she gives us of her visions, writes of herself that she never believed so firmly that it was God who had spoken that she could have sworn to it, even though it were asserted by others. And for this reason, as she says in the same place,

she never did anything in consequence of light received in prayer, but always consulted her confessors; if at times they told her the contrary of that which she had heard from our Lord, she obeyed instantly and executed it.

She acted in this manner especially at the time of the foundation of a house at Malagone;[1] for God had at first revealed to her that the monasteries were to be founded without revenues, but her confessor told her the contrary. She obeyed, and our Lord afterwards showed his approval of her obedience.

And now let us suppose a reasonable doubt which you have concerning the vision, and which you ought to have, if you wish to walk securely: in whose judgment should you place more reliance than in that of your spiritual director, unless you really wish to disregard that beautiful order of obedience which Jesus Christ has left in his Church to make known to us his holy will? You reveal the vision to your director; he tells you it is a delusion, and you do the contrary! Tell me, would St. Teresa have acted in that manner? And you do a very great wrong to Father Falcoia, who was at one time so dear to you, if you say that this saintly man, through partiality, advised you to act against the will of God, and thus betrayed his conscience. When it is not clear and evident that our spiritual director speaks through passion, we must obey him. Falcoia is partial, and Don Silvestro is not so? Celeste, give this great pleasure to God — leave Don Silvestro. I know that you will have to do great violence to yourself, but the greater the violence, the greater will also be the stride towards perfection. Tell me, if God wishes you to leave Don Silvestro, are you willing to make the sacrifice? *But God does not wish it*, you say. Ah! my beloved Celeste in Jesus Christ, who does clearly not see that you are deluded, and what is by far worse, voluntarily so! I know not what excuse you will

[1] Chap. x. *Foundations*.

have for Jesus Christ on the day of judgment, after hearing the truth from so many persons. To this you will perhaps reply: *That is my affair.* Well, then, let us pass to the other point — the affairs of the Institute.

It is certain that the rules[1] noted down by you need a thousand and one explanations. Do you not yourself remember telling me when I first went to the convent that Falcoia acted wisely in sifting the divine elements from the human, as there were many things in the rules which owed their origin to self-will? You moreover agreed to this with regard to the Institute for men, when before the opening of the foundation I went to Scala to call upon you; we canvassed the matter and came to an agreement. Besides the numerous explanations of the rules, there are many other points and constitutions which are to be treated separately, as, for example, the schools,[2] the missions, the houses of studies, the different exercises to be given by us, the occupations which are permitted or prohibited, the academies, the meetings, etc. The missions and schools alone require two separate little books to establish the order which is henceforward to be followed, so that the same observance may ever flourish in the Congregation.

Now, who is to give these explanations and constitutions? Don Vincenzo [Mannarini] and I have no practical experience of Community life; I am moreover an ignoramus. Don Silvestro [Tosquez] is less practical than we. Don Giovanni Battista[3] [di Donato] still retains an affection for

[1] The Sister had written various rules, which she said were revealed to her by Jesus Christ.

[2] At this period St. Alphonsus and Mgr. Falcoia intended to combine the work of the missions with that of the schools.

[3] Don Giovanni Battista di Donato, before joining St. Alphonsus, had been a member of a recently founded Congregation at Teano which he afterwards, in company with Don Vincenzo Mannarini and Silvestro Tosquez, again entered. The Congregation then took the name of the Most Holy Sacrament.

his old Rule; hence, as you know, he is resolutely opposed to the recitation of Office in choir — a point which is so essential. In short, he would like to introduce among us his old Rule. Furthermore, if we should leave Falcoia in order to agree among ourselves upon the rules, Don Silvestro would most certainly wish to play the rôle of director and of infallible interpreter of your revelations, not only of the past, but also of your future visions. He has been accustomed hitherto to play the teacher and not the disciple, and woe to the man who should dare to contradict him in this matter, as experience has shown me that he wishes to rule in everything. And if, scarcely having entered the monastery, he undertook as a secular the guidance of several Sisters who now, according to their own confession, behold themselves emerging from a pit after leaving his spiritual direction; if, I say, having but entered, he wished that permission should be obtained from him when a letter was to be written to Falcoia — what breach would he not effect between us, if we should forsake Falcoia? What happened to those Sisters, my dear Celeste, ought to be a lesson for you. I already believe that it would be your aim after we should have left Falcoia to induce us all to follow Don Silvestro blindly as an oracle, and to depend on him entirely, as you do. If it were God's will I would do so, but at present I do not feel that inspiration. Let us return to the conversation about ourselves.

The only way to establish anything on a solid basis is to place ourselves entirely in the hands of one man, and having communicated to him our ideas, to follow blindly his counsels and directions. He must be a man of experience, with a practical knowledge of Community life, missions, and other spiritual exercises; he must be well versed in the sciences necessary for a missionary, a man of enlightened spirit, and finally, one who will solve all doubts and questions without appeal. In this manner charity and unity will

be the better preserved among us, for they are, as you yourself say, and as I have so often repeated, in fact *ad nauseam*, necessary for us to guide our little bark aright. And tell me, what Rule of religious Order or Congregation was not established in this way, that is, by depending entirely on one director? I had at first a doubt whether this was the case in the Reform of St. Teresa, when doubts arose concerning the Rule of St. Albert which had been adopted by the saint. Afterwards, however, I discovered that although the first companions of St. Teresa were holy men, experienced in Community life, the Reform was on the verge of destruction because they did not follow one director; so great a diversity of observances was introduced in consequence of this that the saint feared that the Reform would suffer shipwreck. At last, Father Graziano having visited the houses of the Reform, and having found a different observance in each one, drew up the constitutions himself, as we find them to-day in the chronicles; these constitutions were then adopted by all.

Thus, I say, to establish the Rule and Institute firmly, it is necessary for us to place ourselves entirely in the hands of one experienced guide, as well because we ourselves are not fit, as because this way is easy and safe — one which is followed by all religious Orders. Again, such a course will serve to maintain unity among us. Otherwise there will never be that perfect harmony among us; for, on the one hand, we should have unceasingly to discuss our mutual pretensions, and on the other hand, the formation of the rules would go on indefinitely, amid continual jarring and wrangling.

But, you say, *to obviate all this, one should yield to the other.* My dear Celeste, this is impossible. It would be possible and all very well, if there were question here of honors, of comforts, in short, of indifferent things; but when there is question of matters pertaining to the glory

of God, no one, unless bound by obedience and by the promise to abide by the decisions of one director, is ready to yield in points which he believes to be for the greater glory of God. And this experience itself would teach you, as it has taught me up to the present moment, for we have not been able to agree even in unimportant things. Hence, we must always — yes, always — have one to whom we can refer our doubts for solution; every man who has the use of his reason and who is not crack-brained will recognize the truth of this. Why, your Don Vincenzo only lately told me the very same thing himself.

You will say: *Place yourself at the disposal of your present Superior.*[1] I venerate Father Superior, and know that I have to obey him in the rules already established; but I never have had the intention to follow any rules which Don Giovanni Battista might make. I will obey only in that which Mgr. Falcoia ordains, for he is my director and the director of the whole work. My Sister, let me tell you once for all that I have not entered the Institute to become its head and director, or to take precedence in anything, as you seem to insinuate, or to please men. You yourself can remember that when Falcoia begged me to use my influence with Guerriero[2] to obtain the approbation of your rules, I told him plainly and frankly that he would have to excuse me, as it was against the obedience which was due to my director at that time. I tell you that I have come here solely to obey God, and I hope never to leave, no matter how great the solicitations and importunities of men may be. I have just been implored to return to Naples. I beg you to understand that in so acting I am not following your revelations, as I told you in the very beginning. I am travelling only the well-beaten and secure road of obedience

1 By the advice of Alphonsus Don Giovanni Battista di Donato had become Superior of the new Community of Scala.

2 Nicola Guerriero was Bishop of Scala.

to my spiritual guides, where, as Jesus Christ has promised us, we are sure to ascertain the will of God, and this, as the masters of the spiritual life tell us, he has not attached to all the revelations in the world. St. Teresa in particular says in chapter 10 of the *Foundations*, that we ought in this life to place ourselves unreservedly in the hands of a guide, be he Superior or Confessor, relying entirely on the truth of these words: *Qui vos audit, me audit*—he who hears you, hears me. For, as she adds, our Lord esteems this submission so highly that although what is commanded appears to be utterly absurd, by overcoming ourselves and obeying our Superiors we succeed in fulfilling the will of God most perfectly.

Now you know that I have surrendered myself entirely into the hands of Falcoia, and so I hope to live and die under the yoke of obedience. If you choose to follow another route, good-bye till we meet again, at the place for which you are striving. If I follow the beck of obedience, I shall certainly sanctify myself; but as you have left your guide, I do not know whether you will become a saint. I tell you that I have no intention of deserting Falcoia, even though all — if such a thing were possible — should place themselves entirely in my hands. Do you not see that it is far better to give up one's vocation, than to give up the practice of obedience — that is, if a true vocation could exist without obedience. To conclude, I am content to leave the Institute and to practise obedience rather than remain in the Institute and give up obedience. I am aware that St. Philip Neri thought more of a soul that walked the ordinary way of obedience than of another who, following its own will, did great things for the glory of God. Let me also tell you that when doubts caused by what I now know of you arise in my mind whether your former lights were not also delusions (for it is certain that all the lights and visions confirming you in your obstinacy, which you say

you enjoy, are illusions, as Falcoia wrote you, and as every one can see), I encourage myself with the thought that in this matter I am not following your revelations, but I am practising obedience to my spiritual director. And thus, even if all your visions were delusions, I am walking securely in holy obedience, and I cannot take a wrong step in my vocation.

But to return to ourselves. Let us suppose, then, that a man must be selected to settle all doubts and present difficulties. Don Vincenzo says that *we should choose some one else, not Falcoia!* But, I ask, why must we choose some other person and not Falcoia, unless we wish to make the choice under the influence of passion? As for Falcoia, we have received only too many signs from God, showing that he is the man destined to regulate the work. The fact that he was your confessor would be sufficient of itself to show this; for as your confessor, it was his duty, and no one else's, to explain and approve of your lights and visions, just as the confessor of St. Teresa who guided her in the matter of the revelation with regard to the Reform, directed the whole work of the Reform. Besides, we have the testimony of Sister Maria Colomba[1] who wrote to me in the beginning (I have just re-read her letter): "I understood that the divine Majesty wishes to have you as head of the Institute, dependent, however, on his beloved son, Tommaso [Falcoia]; for the divine Majesty has chosen him as the principal head to regulate this great work." Colomba, then, wrote to me that she had heard this from our Lord on several occasions. But then Colomba may be under a delusion? And Celeste, I maintain, can be in the same state. To tell the truth, I look upon you both as saints; but as there is question here of delusions under which our Lord at times permits holy souls to labor, as we know from

[1] She was a nun at Scala, and had received many supernatural favors.

the life of Sister Maria Serafina of Capri and of others, why should I believe Colomba, and not you, to be deluded, especially when I behold her travelling the safe road of obedience, presenting in this respect so great a contrast to you? You yourself wrote to me several times that we must depend on Falcoia in this work. In a letter which, if you wish I shall send to you, — for our Lord, not without good reason, inspired me to preserve it, — you express yourself in the following terms: "Give yourself no more trouble; leave everything to the judgment of our Father whom God has placed over the work, and on whom all should depend." What follows is only a confirmation of the above-quoted passage. Now you will say, *I have received contrary directions*. And who, pray, approves of these blessed lights? Have I perhaps to believe what you tell me now, and not what you have told me in the past? Lastly, you must remember, my dear Celeste, that Falcoia, as far as the Institute is concerned, has not followed exclusively your revelations, but has consulted the lights and revelations of others, and in the first place those which he himself received from God, before he made your acquaintance. For this reason he has for many years been endeavoring to establish an Institute of this kind, both at Naples and at Rome, following above all the light of the Gospel, which is worth more than your combined lights — yours and Falcoia's.

But setting aside those supernatural elements, we should adopt the course I propose, since we see at least that it is the shortest and safest way to establish the rules and to preserve union and harmony; now if this be the case, why not select Falcoia? Before Don Silvestro appeared upon the scene, we had in fact already chosen Falcoia: for his name was ever in our mouths: to him we always had recourse in our difficulties; he is a man of many years' experience, of an enlightened spirit, learned, with a practical knowledge of Community life, of missions, and finally

of secular matters; in short, it would be difficult to find many who possess in so high a degree as he all those qualities that are necessary for the regulation of this great work. Or is there perhaps an express revelation that God wishes us to depend upon any one but Falcoia?

Ah! my God, what a terrible hallucination you have been laboring under, Celeste! This happens when an enlightened soul through some fault of her own falls into a delusion; this I make bold to say of you, and I add that a miracle on the part of God is necessary to open your eyes to the light. See how disunited we are, and know that you are the cause of this disunion. Celeste, — I am speaking to you in the name of God, — consider well that you by your obstinacy are devoting to destruction a work that is not yours, but God's. True it is that neither you nor all the men in the world can ruin the work of God if he wills to prevent it; I am inclined to think that if you remain stiff-necked, our Lord will aid us only the more, for when there shall be no longer any talk about lights and revelations, we shall the more easily obtain the approbation of Rome. But as for you, if you appear before Jesus Christ burdened with the charge of having tried to ruin his work, what will become of your poor soul? If I be excluded from the Institute, as you keep repeating, I confess that I deserve to be excluded and am content, provided I am allowed to practise obedience; but I beg you at the same time to understand that neither you nor Don Silvestro can expel me from the Institute: that is God's affair, and he needs neither you nor Don Silvestro. I regard myself unmistakably called to the Institute, for obedience has told me so.

As for you, Celeste, I see you on the brink of an awful precipice, and I shall bitterly regret your loss if you do not turn back. I behold you living without practising obedience to Falcoia whom you are obliged to obey, at least as spiritual director of your Community. It may already be

said that you have lost the sense of obedience to your true Superiors and have lost your peace of soul. See that you do not suffer the shipwreck of your soul, for you are on the way. I have had novenas said for you in several places; but I see you are too hard-hearted. I fear that God is already abandoning you.

My dear Sister, I have spoken to you for the glory of God and for the welfare of your soul; do not become angry. It will do no good now to trouble yourself to write to me. I know well that that brain of yours will be able to find replies and counter-replies, but what I do not know is that these will be of any service to you when you stand before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, especially as I see that you are growing only more obstinate in your opinions, and are bent entirely on finding answers, and not on sanctifying yourself.

My dear Celeste, do listen to me: humble yourself; the Lord will certainly enlighten you if you humble yourself; obey your Superiors, and you will fall into no error: Falcoia is holy and meek; do not for a moment imagine that he wishes you ill. If you humble yourself before him, you will be dearer to him than at first; be resigned to the will of God, and pray; otherwise your prayer will be of no service to you, all your reasons will be passions, and your revelations will be imagination and delusion. If you do not care to listen to me and Falcoia, consult other unprejudiced men. Seek other assistance; do not walk blindly on the road of perdition; seek the advice of others, not to find matter for reply, but to discover and embrace the truth with your whole heart.

Believe me, dear Celeste, all that I have written, I have written because I love you in Jesus Christ; if you wish me evil you do me a great wrong. May Jesus and Mary induce you to do the will of God!

My letter is finished; but I feel myself necessitated to say

a few more words. My dear Celeste, pardon me if I conclude by speaking too frankly. Do you not recognize the fact that you are attached to Don Silvestro, and that he returns this feeling? You say: *It is an affection in God, because I seek nothing but God.* I do not say that you are sinning thereby; but, am I not right in saying that there is a great deal of this earth in such an affection? You do not seek God alone in Don Silvestro, but look also for something else, which is not God. You are in the mire; take care lest by following Don Silvestro you voluntarily place yourself in danger of losing God. Again you say: *I rely on God.* No. I tell you, Celeste, you do not place your reliance on God in this matter; for God does not assist, nay, he abandons those who of their own free will expose themselves to danger. To sum up: So much is certain, if you follow Falcoia, you will surely become a saint; if you follow Don Silvestro, you will certainly not sanctify yourself, and only God knows whether you will be saved.

Live Jesus and Mary!

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI, a poor sinner.

After an old copy.

LETTER 8.

To the Nuns of the Monastery of Pocara.[1]

The saint informs them of his intended visit.

[1733.]

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

My dear daughters, I remember that in the letter I sent you yesterday I told you I would come Thursday a week; but this is a mistake, because the letter was written before yesterday. I will come on Thursday of this week, and will

[1] Our saint had given the spiritual exercises to these nuns in the month of March of the same year, 1733.

preach on the same day. Praised be Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

When I arrive, do not force me to listen to useless complaints; let me find you entirely divested of yourselves, so that you no longer have anything of your own.

After the original in the possession of Father Alfonso Fusco, C. SS. R.

LETTER 9.

To the Priest Giuseppe Cerchia at Castellammare.[1]

He exhorts him to leave the world, and to give himself entirely to God.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

SCALA, July 3, 1733.

See, now, to what a fine conclusion you have come: *Spiritus promptus est, caro autem infirma!* [The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. — *Matt.* xxvi. 41.] This is the way in which you correspond to the graces received from our good Mother Mary! Such is the generous resolution that you have formed of giving yourself entirely to God! *Spiritus promptus est, caro autem infirma!*

I beg you, for pity's sake, come quickly, quickly, quickly. Why speak of your family, of your mother, of your brothers, of your relatives! *Audi, filia . . . . obliviscere populum tuum, et concupiscet te Rex.* [Hearken, O daughter . . . . forget thy people and thy father's house, and the King shall greatly desire thy beauty. — *Ps.* xliv. 11, 12.] He that does not leave all for God, will not find God entirely. Make haste! there are many missions to be given, and we wish to have you with us. Your mother is well now; come then to Scala without delay; fix your own time for your

[1] Although St. Alphonsus wrote many letters to this priest, the latter could not be induced to enter our Institute, for which he however, always entertained the greatest affection.

departure, and profit by the convenience that I now offer you, for I do not wish to expose you to the unpleasantness of another journey. Come speedily, speedily! Let the desire that we cherish of seeing you, urge you to come without delay; and be convinced that you can work here even better than at Castellammare. *Si quis . . . . non odit patrem suum, et matrem . . . . non potest meus esse discipulus.* [If any man . . . . hate not his father, and mother . . . . he cannot be my disciple. — *Luke*, xv. 26.]

Pray to our Mother Mary for me. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 10.

To the Same.

He continues the same exhortation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

SCALA, July 13, 1733.

At the beginning of next month we shall begin a mission at Agerola; but we expect to see you at Scala before we set out for the mission. You have resolved not only to assist us in our missions as an auxiliary priest, but also to give yourself entirely to Jesus Christ by sacrificing to him your family, your relatives, and your country. If you do not do this, you will never arrive at sanctity; — never, never! *Si quis . . . . non odit patrem suum, et matrem . . . . non potest meus esse discipulus.* [If any man . . . . hate not his father, and mother . . . . he cannot be my disciple. — *Luke*, xv. 26.] Up to the present, you acted the brave man; all was for God; and now, what is the matter with you?

Come, now! set out at once; you see that the Lord has consoled you by restoring health to your mother; come quickly; obtain an *exeat* from the bishop, and come. We do not wish that you bring with you any baggage or

money; food and clothing will not be wanting. There is no question among us of family, of relatives, of strangers: we think only of loving God, and of doing perfectly his holy will. Come without delay; I shall take no excuse. God does not wish you to be a curate in a parish; he wishes you to be in the Institute of the Most Holy Saviour.

Make haste! for you should prepare yourself little by little for the exercises of the missions, in order that disengaged from all care you may be able to give yourself entirely to the service of God and of souls. The souls that belong to God are not only those of Castellammare; those of other places have also been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ, and have perhaps more need of succor. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Quickly, quickly, quickly! I wish no answer; you must answer this letter by coming yourself.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER II.

To the Same.

He renews his request, briefly repeating to him the same reasons.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

SCALA, July 21, 1733.

My dear Don Giuseppe: When will you come, when? You seem to wish that we should purchase dearly your arrival! Come at once; what are you waiting for? We wish to have you; Jesus Christ is calling for you; our Mother Mary is waiting for you: and you remain where you are and say: *Spiritus promptus est, caro autem infirma!* [The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. — *Matt.* xxvi. 41.] But I answer: *Qui non odit matrem, fratrem, etc., non potest meus esse discipulus.*

[Who does not hate mother, brother, etc., cannot be my disciple.]

Please hurry; I wish that you should prepare for the instructions that are to be given during the next missions. Come and seek solitude; come to seek God: *Audi filia.... obliviscere populum tuum, et domum patris tui; et concupiscet Rex decorem tuum.* [Hearken, O daughter .... forget thy people and thy father's house; and the King shall greatly desire thy beauty. — *Ps.* xliv. 11.] If you do not do so, you will never become a saint; — no; never! Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 12.

To the Same.

He assures him of his prayers and again invites him to proceed to Scala.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

SCALA, August 11, 1733.

My dear Don Giuseppe: Send me some news about your health. I do not doubt that you will give me good news; for on hearing that you are not very well I recommended you earnestly to our Mother Mary. If you are not in bed, come without delay; you will become well at Scala. Our dear Don Gennaro[1] has arrived, and at the end of August we shall set out for the missions. Come, therefore, in all haste, as soon as you think that you will be able to bear the journey. In the mean time, I shall not cease to recommend you and to have you recommended to our Mother Mary, and I hope that we shall be heard.

But I beg you to drive out of your head all that keeps you back, namely, your mother, your family, and your relatives. I ask this as a favor, for without it I really

[1] The Venerable Gennaro Sarnelli.

believe that you cannot sanctify yourself: *Audi filia, et vide, et inclina aurem tuam; et obliviscere populum tuum, et domum patris tui; et concupiscet* (what a beautiful word!) *et concupiscet Rex decorem tuum.* [Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear, and forget thy people and thy father's house; and the King shall greatly desire thy beauty. — *Ps.* xliv. 11.] Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 13.

To the Same.

He refutes one of his objections.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

SCALA, August 18, 1733.

I very well see, my dear Giuseppe, that you feel a repugnance to be one of our number, and that this repugnance is growing from day to day. Has any one ever heard it said that a son must renounce a more perfect life in order to attend to his mother when she has with her in the same place, where she is living, several secular sons? *But he should renounce it. Because his mother does not wish to live with them!* If she does not wish to live with them, you are not obliged to give up the more perfect life to which God has called you, and in which you would serve him, divested of everything, etc. In short, I do not wish to say more, for I see that more words would undoubtedly be lost upon you through your fault. Perhaps the foundation at Caiazzo, which had already been decided upon, will not take place, but enough: we do not wish to force any one. At least speak to Don Gennaro Sarnelli to whom you have, it is true, given your word; but such promises are not binding. At all events, let us have you for the missions which will soon take place; we are expecting a definite answer, and when I receive it I will communicate it at once.

As for your illness, I have had you recommended to our Mother Mary. Pray at least for us. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

You must also know that if you do not come, you will displease the bishop; however, do as you please.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 14.

To the Same.

He invites him to assist him at least in the missions as an auxiliary priest.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

SCALA, August 30, 1733.

When one cannot do a certain thing, one cannot do it. Be it so; and I say, When one is not willing to do it, one is not willing. — But that is enough; I have no intention to annoy you any more. We do not wish to see you among us if you do not come to remain with us with your whole heart; for we do not take people by force.

Give us the pleasure of accompanying us on the missions; as soon as I receive notice of the time they begin I shall let you know. Yet it may be that we shall not first go to Agerola, because sickness appears to continue there; we shall begin in other places. You would then have to come to Scala; but this, you will say, would not be a trifling thing for you to do, since Scala has become so odious to you that you would not wish even to pass through it!

This is enough; more words would be useless. I do not believe that you will take offence at our desire to have you as our confrère. During this novena pray to our dear Mother Mary for me a poor miserable being. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 15.

To the Priest D. Francesco de Viva.

He exhorts him to detach himself from all human affection.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

VILLA, June 7, 1734.

My dear Ciccio: We see in an evident manner that Jesus Christ is blessing us, and that he wishes to make it known in us that it is of him that it is said: *De stercore erigens pauperem.* [Lifteth up the poor from the dunghill. — 1 *Kings*, ii. 8.]

Continue to labor with Father Campanello for the "little crown of the Infant Jesus." Go in search of him, or write to him, otherwise you will not succeed.

As for your retreat at Santa Maria del Vignanello,[1] my dear Ciccio, how can you doubt that I feel an extreme pleasure of having you as a neighbor, since I have been wishing to draw you still closer to me? I believed even that it was perhaps already a settled matter when I saw you so much inclined to a retired life, and so enamoured of the charms of virtue. But human respect, or rather my sins, have placed an obstacle thereto. How could I, after that, not esteem myself very happy to have you at least for my neighbor, and to enjoy, at least sometimes during the year, during the holy missions, the beautiful examples of virtue that you give? But listen to me, dear Ciccio: you will not be perfectly happy, and perhaps even you will with difficulty belong entirely to Jesus Christ if you do not really renounce Campanello, and tread under foot the world with all its considerations. Thomas à Kempis says: *Dimitte omnia, et invenies omnia.* [Put aside all things, and you will find all

[1] S. Maria del Vignanello was a hermitage not far from Villa degli Schiavi, where the holy founder had opened the second house of his Institute, and where he had been living for about a month.

things.] But I must stop; I do not wish to carry my boldness farther in the case of one that can give me lessons both in science and in virtue.

Recommend me to Jesus and Mary, and recommend to them your affair specially during this month. Who knows what our dear Mother Mary will say to you? Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Be so kind as to send to me four pictures of the Blessed Virgin of Caravaggio; send me also an answer. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 16.

To the Same.

Great works should rest only on the spirit of faith and on confidence in God.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

VILLA, July 15, [1734].

You tell me that I should write to you often; here I am, but what must I tell you? You write to me that neither Campanello nor human considerations are keeping you from entering the Institute, but from what you say you seem to think it impossible for the work of the Institute to succeed. But I answer you in the words of Jesus Christ: *Apud homines hoc impedimentum est, apud Deum omnia possibilia sunt.* [With men this is impossible, with God all things are possible. — *Matt.* xix. 26.]

But what support have you? We have God. And which supernatural work of great importance has ever rested upon human support? Tell me what human support had the foundation of St. Francis, of St. John of the Cross, of St. Teresa?

You tell me that this priest[1] has better human resources

[1] A priest that tried a work analogous to that of St. Alphonsus.

than we; hence for this reason we should have more confidence than he, since the more important the works are, the more Jesus Christ causes them to rise out of nothing and from the midst of contradictions, so as to make them admired and venerated by all as God's work, and not as the work of men. And what work was more destitute of human means than the preaching of the Gospel? Ah! my dear Don Ciccio, as long as you speak thus, it will be evident that you are not called to the Institute; because Jesus Christ wishes that there should be in our Institute men who are dead to their own will and their own judgment; men, moreover, who have put their confidence in God, and not in human means.

You tell me that you would wait and see, and then decide; but take care that lest before finishing the reflection life itself may not finish, because very likely in order to see the affairs of our Institute settled many years will be required. For the reform of the Carmelites, fifty years, if I mistake not, had to pass before everything was definitely settled.

O my God! if Jesus Christ should wish that the Institute is to cease with us, what injury would be done if in the mean time, as you see, we should give ourselves up less to prayer and to the salvation of souls, redeemed by Jesus Christ? And although the Institute should be dissolved before the end of our life, would this be ever a great disgrace to us, for having undertaken so holy a work the end of which is certainly very grand? And if ever we should earn thereby the contempt of men, shall we not likely gain the good pleasure of Jesus Christ, since we have been doing what contributes so much to his glory? But you must know, my dear Ciccio, that we shall understand these things better when all of us, we and those that discredit the Institute, shall be in eternity; then we shall see which was dearer to Jesus Christ: to have been a member of the

Institute, or to have thrown discredit upon it. Remember that if we do not lose confidence, the Institute will surely not be dissolved. Only if we are wanting in confidence in God, and if we place our hopes in human aid, shall this work be destroyed. This we know by experience, because when we confided in human means the whole work was nearly destroyed.[1] God is omnipotent, *et Protector est omnium sperantium in se* [and the Protector of all those that trust in Him—*Ps.* xvii. 31.] And I tell you the truth: my hopes for the Institute are supported by the great confidence that I notice in my companions, who astonish me when I see them advance, and as it were flying, towards perfection. I assure you, I feel ashamed to see myself among them.

Ah! my dear Don Ciccio, who could it have been that has done what has hitherto been done? I or God? And this God can also finish what he has begun.

If therefore Jesus Christ does not wish to afford me the consolation of having you as my Brother, I must have patience, for I do not deserve such a favor. Come soon to Santa Maria del Vignanello; we shall then be at least brethren on the missions. But, my dear Don Ciccio, when you speak of us be careful, because your words can do more harm to us than the words of others, and because we esteem you our friend; therefore your words have greater weight, and what you say will continually be repeated.

Continue to prepare with Father Campanello that *little crown;* but labor is necessary; the Infant Jesus will however reward you for it.

I wish to have the pictures of Santa Maria di Carrevaggio which you have promised me. I shall have prayers said for you by our little Community.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa! Leave word at

[1] He refers to the hope placed in D. Silvestro Tosquez of obtaining the Imperial approbation through his brother who had great influence at the court of Vienna.

the house of Rendina that their Gennaro[1] is content, and that I love him as my own brother. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI.

After an old copy.

LETTER 17.

To Father Tommaso Pagano, Priest of the Oratory at Naples.

A brief dissertation on the question, whether and when a priest is obliged to go to the country of the heathen, and to preach to them the teachings of the Gospel.[2]

[July, 1734.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Don Mattheo Ripa[3] said at Naples that before reaching the Indies we come to the Cape of Good Hope where there are many idolatrous people, and where no one goes to teach the faith. It is asked whether he that knows this state of things is obliged to go there.

The question is reduced to the general question, whether in the spiritual necessities of our neighbor we are obliged to help him at grave inconvenience to ourselves.

It is the common opinion according to the theologians of Salamanca that in regard to the necessities of individuals,

[1] Gennaro Rendina, born at Naples, September 28, 1707, entered the new Institute where as a lay-brother he died after a holy life at an advanced age.

[2] The saint, as appears from his *journal*, before founding his Congregation, had cherished the idea of consecrating himself to the missions in heathen countries. Two years after the foundation he wished to carry out his intention; but Mgr. Falcoia in a letter dated July 20, 1734, and Father Tommaso Pagano, his first director, in another letter of August 4, the same year, forbade him to do so.

[3] The founder of the Congregation of the Holy Family among the members of which St. Alphonsus had lived for two years. The seat of this Congregation at Naples was called the Chinese College, its object being to train missionaries for China.

we are obliged to help them at the risk of our property, reputation, and life, only in an extreme necessity, in respect to which extreme necessity two things are required, namely: 1. *Ut proximus sine tuo auxilio damnandus sit* [that your neighbor would be damned if you do not help him]; 2. *Ut non habeat a quo sublevetur* [that there is no one to help him]. The theologians of Salamanca therefore say that *non debes navigare ad Indos convertendos, cum sint qui subvenire possunt, et alias est incertum illos esse per te convertendos* [you need not travel to the Indies to convert the inhabitants when there are those that can assist them, and it is otherwise uncertain whether they would be converted by you.] Tamburini says that when there is any uncertainty chiefly about success we are excused from going among the heathen.

The theologians of Salamanca say that it is the common opinion that in reference to the necessities of any Community we are obliged to come to their assistance in a grave necessity even at our grave inconvenience. They say for example: That preachers are obliged at their grave peril to denounce public sins of scandal; or if during an incursion of enemies there is no administration of the sacraments, and without it the faith of the people is endangered, you are obliged to administer the sacraments at the peril of your life.

This doctrine being supposed, it is asked why the theologians of Salamanca put the case of travelling to the Indies among the necessities of individuals, and not among the necessities of Communities, since there is question of entire kingdoms of idolaters; and Bonacina and Viva when speaking of the heathen speak of a case of extreme necessity. Hence it appears that to prove the obligation of which we speak, it is sufficient to establish here a grave, not an extreme necessity.

That these countries are in a grave necessity as regards their spiritual condition appears to be certain, since few missionaries go there. It is true, the theologians of Salamanca

say that there is then this obligation of going there when *aliter subveniri non potest* [when otherwise they could receive no assistance]; and Laymann says of this obligation *quando populus infidelis sit omni sacerdote destitutus* [when the unbelieving people are without a priest]. Of these people it could be said that they are altogether deprived of the services of a priest, *et aliter subveniri non potest* [and cannot be otherwise assisted].

However, speaking of the above-mentioned case of the Cape of Good Hope, it might be said that at least at present there is some one to go to the assistance of its people if this has not been done in the past, or at least some one will be able to do so in future; particularly since bishops are appointed for such places, and they are obliged to provide for them, etc. Thus at least *aliter subveniri potest* [they can be helped otherwise]; hence, individuals are excused from going there. Or if any one of these Communities is altogether destitute of help, it must be supposed that the many missionaries sent to these forsaken places have abandoned them, because there was no hope of being of any benefit to its inhabitants. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 18.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce in the Monastery at Camigliano.[1]

He writes out for her a rule of life, and exhorts her to give herself up entirely to God.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

VILLA, August 26, [1734.]

Beloved Sister and daughter in Jesus Christ, let us praise together the goodness of Jesus, since he has vouchsafed to give you through my letter a greater desire to love him.

[1] Camigliano, a town in the diocese of Calvi.

As for mortifications, you may use the discipline four times a week, but not to blood, and wear twice the cilicium till dinner-time. Try to mortify yourself also in eating by abstaining from fruit three times a week, and from something more on Wednesdays and Fridays; on Saturdays only you may fast on bread and water. In the evening be careful to eat as little as possible, in order to be well disposed for your devotions in the night and in the morning.

As for prayer, I should wish that besides the hour during which it is made in common, you would devote another hour in private, at the most convenient time, especially during the night and during the hours of the greatest solitude when Jesus speaks to the souls whom he loves. In regard to silence, I wish that it be strictly observed: except during the time of recreation, that is to say, after dinner and after supper, do not speak without necessity, and speak always in a low tone of voice; moreover, during the day, devote two hours to a stricter silence. We never find a soul given to prayer that speaks much. Whoever really loves Jesus should never wish to speak to any other than to Jesus, never to see nor to hear any one else than Jesus.

Every week, choose a day of retreat for the purpose of spending it entirely in prayer, in spiritual reading, and in other exercises of piety.

Make every day a half hour's spiritual reading on the virtues; often read in St. John of the Cross that passage in which he speaks of the seven deadly sins, of pride, etc., which one may find at the beginning of the Obscure Night.

In the novenas you may increase the foregoing mortifications by using the discipline every day, etc.

If you follow these rules, you may receive holy Communion, if it is permitted to you, three or four times a week, and during the novenas every day.

Have great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and every day in visiting her, place yourself entirely in her hands.

Make at least three visits every day to the Blessed Sacrament.

In prayer see to what you are most attracted, and meditate upon it; then employ the time in making acts of love to Jesus and Mary, and in asking them for graces. Outside of the time of prayer you must always be sighing for this divine Spouse, who loves you, and who only deserves all your love. If you fall into any sin, rise again with courage by making an act of love of Jesus Christ, and think no more of the sin except to confess it.

In case of illness, omit all the mortifications that may injure you.

This is all that I have to say to you for the present. Strengthen yourself in the resolution to give yourself entirely to God, since he wishes to give himself entirely to you.

The little girl is yet too much of a child to exact from her the spiritual life; you may, however, promote the glory of God by letting her advance in his holy love, but without too great a solicitude. If, nevertheless, she should be truly an obstacle to your spiritual good, endeavor to find out a means of getting rid of her; if not, Jesus Christ will assist you.

I beg you to recommend me to Jesus and Mary in all your prayers and Communions, and to make a novena to Mary to obtain for me certain graces that I desire.

Though I am so wretched, yet this morning I prayed to Jesus Christ for you in a special manner, in order that he may dispose you to give yourself entirely to him by renouncing for the love of him every consolation in this life and the next. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI.

After an old copy.

LETTER 19.

To the Same.

He exhorts her to fervor, and tells her what she is to do on his visit to Camigliano.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

VILLA, September 19, [1734.]

I write in haste, because the porter is in a hurry to depart. I received your letter at Caiazzo, where I was engaged in giving a retreat to the religious. I learn with what fervor you have resumed the service of Jesus Christ, your Spouse; henceforth pray to him unceasingly to obtain perseverance, and fear that you may relapse into tepidity which would perhaps be succeeded by a great chastisement on the part of our Lord who, when he calls, wishes that we respond to his voice. Continue always to make your meditation as you are doing, and do not omit it, however great may be your coldness; be convinced that it is on meditation that your progress in virtue depends.

If you desire my presence, send me the evening before a conveyance with some one to accompany me, and I shall devote a day to your service. At the same time ask for me jurisdiction to hear confessions, and permission to address a few words to the Community, if it be desirable. Do not, however, speak to me about making a general confession; because for certain souls a general confession, after having been once made, is more hurtful than useful. This visit would be only for the purpose of giving the religious some advice, though I have already given it by letter, and I do not know what more important counsels I could communicate by word of mouth. If, therefore, you could spare me this journey, and defer it to another occasion when it would be more urgent, you would afford me great pleasure. However, if you send a conveyance, and obtain the needed permissions,

I shall be at your service; but this must not be on a feast-day, nor on a Tuesday, nor a Thursday.

Recommend me always to Jesus and to Mary. It would be better to induce the bishop to have a mission; then we would give a regular retreat to the Community, and very much good would result therefrom. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble and grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI.

After an old copy.

LETTER 20.

To Monsignor Pietro Agostino Scorza,[1] Archbishop of Amalfi.

The saint asks him to fix the time for the spiritual exercises to be given to the clergy of Amalfi, and points out the difficulties that have arisen in regard to making a foundation at Positano.

[End of February, 1735.]

Most Reverend and Dear Sir: Remembering the orders that your Grace gave me in regard to the exercises to be given to the clergy of Amalfi, I beg you to inform me of the time that will best suit you. Rest assured that I will do all I can to oblige you; and I feel myself under the greatest obligation to you for all the kindness and affection that your Grace has shown to poor me.

I should be pleased to have the exercises given during Passion week, beginning on the preceding Saturday, and ending on the Saturday before Palm Sunday, because after Easter I should like to go at once to Caiazzo on account of business connected with the Institute.

I say this, because your Grace already knows of the

[1] Pietro Agosto Scorza, born at Torre Maggiore, July 11, 1676, was first bishop of Teramo; then from April 9, 1731, archbishop of Amalfi, where he died in 1747, or at the beginning of 1748.

demands made by the gentlemen of Positano;[1] they wish that we should take charge of the school; this demand I have regarded as surprising, since from the beginning I have repeated to them many times that I cannot agree to such a proposal . . . . how annoying! Having inconvenienced your Grace and me (God knows in what straits I was in my endeavor to satisfy them) they have brought forward the above-mentioned demand . . . I imagine that up to the present time they were not bold enough to speak to me directly about this matter, knowing what has passed, but I have knowledge of it from another source.

After an autograph sketch preserved at Rome in Father General's archives.

LETTER 21.

To Mgr. Constantino Vigilante, Bishop of Caiazzo.

Petition.

[June, 1735.]

Right Reverend Sir: Alphonsus de Liguori, Superior of the Congregation of the Most Holy Saviour of the Villa degli Schiavi has the honor of submitting the following fact:

Your Lordship enjoined upon the administrators of the Santissima Annunziata di Majorano, to furnish the Fathers of our Congregation with six ducats every year on account of the school which the Fathers of said Congregation maintain in said city. Now the time for paying the said six ducats having already matured, the said administrators do

1 In the month of January of this year, the saint with the Venerable Gennaro Sarnelli, and others had given a mission at Positano. On this occasion there was question of founding here a house of the Congregation, but because the municipality wished that the holy founder should assume the obligation of taking care of the public schools, the project was not carried out.

not intend to pay this debt; hence the said suppliant[1] has recourse to your Lordship that satisfaction may be made to him. He wishes you to accept now the assurance of his very sincere thanks, etc.

After an old copy.

LETTER 22.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce.

He exhorts her to persevere in prayer.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

VILLA, December 31, [1735.]

I remember, my dear daughter, to have received two letters from you, and I know that I have answered the second. I even kept for some time this answer, for the reason that I had no one to whom I might intrust it; then I sent it to you, if I mistake not, through some one from Bellona.[2]

I answer you now by way of Fondola,[3] for to-morrow I shall return to Naples. Yes, certainly, I wish you to write to me, and when you do not receive any answer, offer this sacrifice to Jesus Christ.

Begin your retreat as soon as you can, and always tell me

[1] The mediation of the prelate proved useless; but the saint continued nevertheless to take care of the school, as appears from one of his letters addressed to his director, Mgr. Falcoia, dated October 5, of this year, in which we read: "The small income of six ducats [25 fr.] for the school makes no impression upon me, because we should not show the least shadow of being desirous of money, just as we should in no way lose confidence in divine Providence; and since Monsignor would feel displeased if the school were abandoned, we shall not abandon it on any account; the more so as it is not a little service, which is blessed by God, to educate ten or twelve souls who, I hope, will receive less a literary than a moral education. . . ."

[2] A village in the diocese of Capua.

[3] A village in the diocese of Capua.

whether you persevere in prayer, for everything depends on that. I bless you in the name of Jesus and of Mary. Pray always for me in your prayers and Communions; on my part I will not forget you. When you hear that I am no longer at Villa, continue nevertheless to address your letters to me at the same place, for thence I shall receive them, and thence you will also receive my answers. You must, however, have the patience to wait.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI.

After an old copy.

LETTER 23.

To the Priest Francesco di Viva.

He invites him to come to him.

Live the Infant Jesus, and Mary Immaculate!

RECALE, January 25, [1736.]

My dear Don Ciccio: I hope that your catarrh has diminished. I beg you to come to-morrow morning to see me. We shall order the conveyance for you and for D. Gennaro [Sarnelli], and both of you may go together, arranging this with the coachman who will call for you. From this place your Reverence may travel to Villa, and thence to Dragone; for which place I have also been asked for two Fathers. You may then travel together.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI.

After an old copy.

LETTER 24.

To Marquis Giuseppe Gioacchino Montallegre.

Abridgment of the Rule of the Institute of the Most Holy Saviour.

[Month of January 1736.]

Father Ludovico Fiorillo, a Dominican, wrote thus to the saint, January 16, 1736: "This evening, the 16th of the month, I called upon Signor Marchese Montallegre, and was happy to be able to speak to him in detail about the affairs of the new foundation. He promised to do all in his power to obtain the needed approbation. He moreover told me to procure for him an abridgment of the Rule which is observed, so that he may know what to say when he has an audience with the Pope. . . . Send me, therefore, an outline of the Rule."

In compliance with this request, the saint gave the following account: —

It is already four years since a certain number of priests have been living together in Community at Scala; at the request of Monsignor Vigilante, Bishop of Caiazzo, they afterwards founded a house at Villa degli Schiavi, and finally they established one at Ciorani, in the diocese of Salerno. They have been giving satisfaction as much to the bishops and people of those places, as to those who have been coming from the neighborhood where a notable reformation has been wrought in the morals of the inhabitants through the spiritual exercises that have been given.

The principal aim of these priests is to imitate as far as it is possible, with the help of divine grace, the life and the holy virtues of our Lord Jesus Christ, so as to procure spiritual profit for themselves, for the people of the kingdom, particularly of those destitute of help, and to be able to assist the bishops and relieve the spiritual wants of the dioceses.

They live in the above-mentioned houses a perfect Com-

munity life, subject to their own Superior, engaged in various labors for the people, some at the school, some in the confessional, others in giving instructions, in preaching to Confraternities, in oratories, and elsewhere.

In the dioceses where they are staying, they go about giving missions; and afterwards, in order to preserve the good that they do through the help of the divine Majesty, some of them return from time to time to hear confessions, to confirm the people in the resolutions that they have made, by instructions, sermons, spiritual directions, counsel, and so forth.

Within and without their own houses they endeavor with the divine grace to follow as closely as possible the footsteps of our divine Redeemer and Master Jesus Christ Crucified, so that they may serve as models to the people both by word and by example.

Moreover, in order to attain this object their Constitutions prescribe twelve virtues for them to practise; these are: Faith, hope, love of God, concord and charity among themselves, poverty, purity of heart, obedience, meekness and humility of heart, mortification, recollection, prayer, self-abnegation, and the love of the cross.

Every week each one makes a day of retreat in order that, while conversing only with the divine Majesty and devoting himself to the care of his own soul, he may draw thence more strength to labor in behalf of his neighbor.

Whenever they remain at home they spend the greater part of the day in silence, in recollection, in the choir, in the practice of mortification, in meditation, which they make three times a day, namely, in the morning at the first hour, during the day about the hour of Vespers, and in the evening after Compline; there are examinations of conscience before dinner and before going to bed. They, moreover, have domestic meetings during which they discuss the ecclesiastical sciences, the mode of advancing more and

more in a solid, true, and positive imitation of the sublime virtues of the divine Majesty, the manner of more effectively laboring for the spiritual welfare of souls, especially of those that are mostly neglected, and that live in abandoned places.

The houses of the subjects are not numerous, and in regard to their maintenance they seek to be troublesome to no one, but they support themselves by that which they have brought from their own families, and which they place at the feet of the Superior, and by that which is voluntarily offered to them by the faithful for the love of Jesus Christ.

This is a brief sketch of the aim and purpose of the Institute of the Most Holy Saviour.

After the original written by the hand of Father Cesare Sportelli.

LETTER 25.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce, in the Monastery at Camigliano.

Exhortation to practise renunciation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI [1736.]

Your letter, my dear daughter, is the first that I have received from you for a long time, and I do not remember to have received any letter from you without having answered it.

My answer to-day will, however, be short, for you tell me in your letter that you are painfully continuing in the practice of prayer, and that you are always in desolation: two things that afford me great pleasure.

Continue then, and do not even ask our Lord for consolation; make even every day a special visit of renunciation, I wish to say a visit in which you should renounce for the love of him all consolations and all creatures. Continue

also to pray to our Lord for me; ask him in particular to deprive me of my will, so that I may perfectly unite myself to his.

I have not forgotten you, and I will not forget you in compliance with our agreement. Write to me.

I am at Sanseverino. We shall hardly see each other again in this life; but while doing the will of God, let us hope that we may see each other both as saints in heaven. I leave you with Jesus and Mary. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Have your letters taken to Signor Giovanni Oliviero at Naples, Porta di Capua and di San Onofrio. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your very humble servant and Father,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI.

After the original in possession of Signor Andrea d'Isa at Camigliano.

LETTER 26.

To the Same.

Different counsels of perfection.

Live Infant Jesus, and Mary Immaculate!

[VILLA, February 1736.]

Yesterday, my dear daughter, I received one of your letters, and I answer it this morning. The name of the bearer to whom I intrusted my letter is unknown to me; if then it was lost, you must have patience.

I am quite confused on hearing that our Lord uses my letters for the purpose of doing so much good to your soul. But I must tell you that I am at present going to the diocese of Salerno for a new foundation.[1] Nevertheless I

[1] The foundation at Ciorani.

do not wish to omit rendering you all the services that are in my power. Always write to me, and send your letters here to Villa; care will be taken for them to reach me.

Try, in future, not to allow yourself to be cast down by the thought of your imperfections. The best, then, will be to trust more in God, and to abandon yourself lovingly to his paternal guidance. All our confidence, in fact, rests not on our works, but on the infinite goodness which never rejects those who sincerely seek it.

It would be injurious to your health to sleep in the cell of which you speak; if, however, you are able to have it repaired, I would allow you to ask to have it done as an alms. In the mean time, could you not go to the chapel after supper? I give you permission for an hour. And do not fear; he that loves Jesus, fears no one.

In regard to prayer, do not allow the distractions that come to trouble you. When you perceive them, recall your mind to God, but sweetly, without disquietude, and never reflect upon what you have done in prayer. Seek always to unite yourself to God by your will, but always by sweet and unrestrained acts. Read a little; then leave off, and content yourself with walking on this path of obscure faith; it is the sweet path for sanctifying yourself. Nor should you ever try to seek God with the senses; it is sufficient if you find him with pure love and with the will. In prayer, especially when you are in desolation, always recommend poor sinners without forgetting the souls in purgatory, especially those that have been most devoted to the Most Blessed Sacrament and to Mary.

You must not think for a moment that we shall see each other at Camigliano, because I set out to-morrow. Submit yourself on this point to the will of Jesus Christ. Besides, I do not see that my visit to you is necessary. It would undoubtedly cause you sensible consolation; but you should always sacrifice all consolations of this kind to the love

of Jesus, of this God who lived on this earth constantly deprived of every consolation.

As mistress of novices, try to instruct more by deeds than by words. Let your words be always full of sweetness. Avoid, as a general thing, reproving the novices in public, and always make your corrections by saying kind words.

As a matter of obedience to you, I say: Always remember my poor soul, above all in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament and in your Communions. I bless you in the hearts of Jesus and Mary. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI.

After the original in possession of Father Vincenzo Venditti, C. SS. R.

LETTER 27.

To the Same.

He recommends his Institute to her prayers, and exhorts her to persevere in prayer.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, April 18, [1736].

First of all I must tell you, my dearest daughter, that when you write to me omit the title *Your most illustrious Lord;* it is sufficient to say *Your Reverence* out of respect to the priesthood with which I, though unworthy, am invested.

In the second place, I must tell you that you must not be afraid; when we embrace the cross we also embrace Jesus Christ who is united with the cross.

I thank you for recommending me to Jesus Christ; never omit doing so, whether you receive letters from me or not; and with me always recommend our Institute to Jesus Christ. You must know that we are in great trouble; within a short time we have lost four, perhaps, five subjects; and thus you see how much we need your prayers. Pray

to Jesus Christ to send us subjects; I ask especially for a novena to Mary Immaculate and to St. Joseph, that they may obtain for us three subjects.

In regard to the state of your soul, content yourself with having Jesus in your heart if you have him not before your eyes, and offer up to him this pain — a pain that could not be greater — for the soul that loves Jesus it is a pain that drew complaints from Jesus himself on the cross. But what does he know that knows not how to suffer for God? Thus spoke your St. John of the Cross; and St. Philip Neri said that there is no greater tribulation in this world than to have no tribulations. He added that he that desires to suffer little has little love for God. When you are more desolate than usual, raise up by a sigh your heart to Jesus by saying to him: O my Spouse! I ask not Thy consolations; it is only Thee that I wish. Therefore, endeavor also to feel the pain that was felt by St. Aloysius de Gonzaga; it was for him a martyrdom of love not to be able to love God as much as he acknowledged him worthy of being loved.

Pains or consolations, offer them all to Jesus.

How I love to see in you, dearest daughter, this weariness in prayer, and this perseverance in spite of the weariness! It suffices, then, that you always make acts of union of your will with the will of God.

If you would see, dearest daughter, that all goes well with you in regard to God, where would be your suffering? To suffer, then, would be a paradise. When trouble takes possession of you, try to recover at once peace of mind; persevere in prayer and in your other spiritual exercises, notwithstanding every feeling of disgust, even though all should seem to you to be lost; leave all to Jesus Christ.

Guard against all solicitude in relation to my letters, else they will be for you an obstacle to your perfection.

I send my regards to Mother Superior, and I recommend

myself to the prayers of this afflicted soul, because afflicted souls are dear to God; on my part I have recommended her to Jesus and to Mary. As regards yourself, I follow the agreement that we have made. Live in the hearts of Jesus and Mary! Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble and very devoted servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI.

After an old copy.

LETTER 28.

To the Same.

Counsels in regard to perfection.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, May 23, 1736.

My dear daughter, I received two letters from you at the same time.

Continue to practise meditation as you are doing; it is good; and have in this no other contentment, no other desire than to accomplish the will of the Lord.

Although you may be in desolation and in trouble, yet endeavor always to practise meekness in your relations with your Sisters, and for this end do violence to yourself. Continue to say to them something about God when such a thing is useful to them. Charity is more pleasing to God than humility. Take care, however, on these occasions to acknowledge yourself (but before God more than before those to whom you speak) as miserable and despicable, as you are; and if a thought of vain-glory presents itself do not heed it.

When even you should find yourself colder than snow, do never omit to pray for poor sinners, for the souls in purgatory, and especially for me, in order that I may gain many souls for God.

It seems to me that I have already told you not to ask me any more for the love of Mary to go to see you; but I see that you have repeated the request. If God wishes this, I would obey him; but it is difficult at present, for I am going to make a long stay at Villa. Do not, therefore, ask for this any more. Content yourself with what I can do for you, and I repeat, do not be solicitous on the subject of my letters. I have written to you more than once; but either the letters are lost or they are delayed. Jesus will then grant you this consolation according to his good pleasure, and if he wishes that we should wait till we reach Paradise to see each other, you should be resigned; if not, you would prove that you do not yet belong entirely to God.

I now recommend to you three things: Silence, the exercise of the presence of God, and a tender love for Mary. Pray without ceasing to this good Mother for me, for the Institute, and ask her for subjects; for so far no one has come to replace those that have left us. The month of July is consecrated to Mary; go then, every day of this month, to pray to her to my intention and to that of the Institute that she may send us subjects if it be to her glory.

I leave you in the heart of Jesus, and under the mantle of Mary.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very devoted servant and Father in Jesus and Mary,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI.

After the original in possession of D. Antonio Palmerano at Pignataro Maggiore.

LETTER 29.

To his Father Don Giuseppe de Liguori.

He asks him to help on the work of the Venerable Gennaro Sarnelli.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, July 16, [1736.]

My dear Father: I again recommend to you the affair [1] of D. Gennaro Sarnelli in reference to the removal of prostitutes; it is truly an important work that is conducive to the glory of God. This courageous missionary is the son of the Baron of the barony of Ciorani who does us a thousand favors. He has given us a beautiful piece of property with buildings, and a garden for a house and church. He has also furnished us with lime, wood, and even money in order that we may begin to build. — Asking

[1] This affair of the Ven. Gennaro Sarnelli our saint thus describes in his sketch of Sarnelli's life: "As D. Gennaro saw that these unhappy woman by being scattered through the whole city did immense harm and gave great scandal, he was convinced that the only method of remedying so great an evil was to compel them to live together outside of Naples. The whole city and God, above all, know what labors and expense this project occasioned him, for the furtherance of which he composed several books entitled the "Abuses of Prostitution." This undertaking drew down on him the opposition and the reproaches of friends as well as of enemies, for as they looked upon the thing as impossible, they were always striving to make him abandon it, and were bitterly ridiculing it. But his confidence in God was strong and unshaken, although he was alone and devoid of the help of man. He managed so well with the first ministers of the king, our protector, that he at last had the satisfaction of seeing his desires fulfilled." — We may read the details of this great undertaking in the little work entitled: "Le vénérable serviteur de Dieu, le P. Janvier-Marie Sarnelli." — Paris, Jules Vic., 1886.

you for your blessing, I remain, etc. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 30.

To the Same.

He begs him to speak to him no more about the episcopate.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, August 5 [1736].

My dear Father: I have just heard what has been done in regard to the affair of Father Sarnelli. I beg you to co-operate with him as much as you can for the glory of Jesus Christ.

In regard to the other affair, the episcopate, my dear Father, do not mention it to me any more if you do not wish to give me real pain. In case it were offered to me, even if it were the archbishopric of Naples, I should not fail to refuse it in order to continue this great work to which Jesus Christ has deigned to call me; for if I abandon this work, I would regard myself as almost one of the damned, for having abandoned the vocation that God has so evidently made known to me. I wish, therefore, that you would no longer speak to me or to any one else about this affair, the more so, since in our Institute we are obliged by the Rule to renounce the episcopate and all dignities.

I do not cease to recommend you to Jesus Christ. May you bless me always, so that I may remain faithful to God to whom I owe everything. I conclude by most humbly throwing myself at your feet and asking you for your blessing. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 31.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce.

He marks out a rule of conduct for her interior and her exterior life.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, September 26 [1736].

I yesterday received your two letters. I learned with great pleasure that you have become detached from that person, and that afterwards you have been blamed. What you have told the Superior is sufficient; there is no longer any need of justifying yourself, unless some are really scandalized at your breaking off in this way, supposing that you are entertaining an aversion. To the other religious you must always show a smiling and friendly countenance.

Penances and mortifications should be performed only when you are well.

In regard to the mission, assure the bishop that he did well to call the missionaries of St. George;[1] for we cannot go so far, and we have so much to do here that we cannot possibly give the mission. Indeed, our number is small; do not, therefore, cease, my dearest daughter, to pray to Jesus and Mary that they may send us companions; always pray, and especially now; for I have been informed that many wish to come. Although we are few in number, yet we are giving missions continually.

I am displeased to learn of the great eagerness that you manifest of seeing me again. A general confession is not necessary, and God does not wish that you should think of seeing me again. I do not go to see even my mother,

[1] Neapolitan Missionaries. — So called from the Church of St. George Major, the seat of their Congregation.

nor any one else. As for Villa, it is not at all proper for me to go there; besides, I could not go without permission, and this permission my director [Mgr. Falcoia] would surely never give me if I asked him. Be therefore undisturbed, and I beg you never more to speak to me about this journey. Be calm; God wishes you to be detached from all creatures — from all without exception; he desires to be your only companion and your consolation.

Here is the advice that I give you:

Use the discipline every day, and wear the cilicium till dinner-time; on Fridays you may do something more: but when you are indisposed, especially when you have only little fever, do nothing, absolutely nothing.

As for the fruit, if you can abstain from it, seeing that it is not strictly necessary for your health, you will do well to abstain from it; it is sufficient if you take it only on Sundays, and then only a small quantity; on other days you may abstain from it when you have soup [*minestra*] and there is no other special reason.

Do not, my dear daughter, complain about my silence; if I do not receive your letters, how can I answer them? Signor Giovanni Oliviero has changed his place of residence. He now lives in the Forcella quarter, in the street called *Sopra Muro*. Now let me know to which person I can address my answers so that they may reach you.

As for past faults, think no more of them. Endeavor to keep aloof from every one: go to the parlor as rarely as possible; if, with the permission of the Superior, you could avoid going there altogether, it would be well; but if this cannot be, on account of business connected with your life-annuity, or other necessities, try at least to show yourself there as rarely as possible. However, if it were possible for you to let your relatives and others know that you would no more go to the parlor, oh, how glad I would be!

Write to Luisa that I am very happy to see her continuing as she does; tell her that she should love Jesus and Mary very much by resolving to sanctify herself earnestly and cordially, and that she should pray for me. And as for you, all the time that you may have, employ it in prayer by always asking Jesus Christ for the grace of doing perfectly his will, in order to belong entirely to him. Oh, how beautiful is it to see a soul that belongs entirely to God, a soul that wishes only God, that loves only God, that thinks only of God, that seeks in all things only God!

When obedience prescribes anything for you to do, especially when you are to attend the sick, leave all your devotions; then in your occupations and fatiguing labor sustain yourself by ejaculatory prayers which you should allow to originate from all that you do or see; render also assistance to the sick every time that you can do so.

Always remember me and our Congregation; you see that on my part I do not forget you, and that I am deeply interested in seeing you a saint. O my dearest daughter! the God that we have is so amiable and so good to him that seeks him with his whole heart. Courage, then! Let us seek God only, him only, and nothing more; and let us always pray to Mary that she may help us to find him.

Make a novena to Mary for the new subjects of whom I have spoken, in order that she may send them to us and confirm them in their good-will. May Mary be our hope, and Jesus alone be our love!

Since you desire to give me a more distinct knowledge of your past life, this is what you may do: When you have a little time, write to me all that concerns your past life, your faults, those at least that may be intrusted to a letter; but on the other hand, note also the little attention that you have given to prayer, etc., and the graces that you have

received from our Lord. I shall thus be better able to direct you.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble and very affectionate Father,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI.

After an old copy.

LETTER 32.

To the Same.

He prescribes for her the way she should behave under existing circumstances.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, October 26 [1736].

My dear daughter: I returned home yesterday, and I now answer your last letter. The expenses of the missions are incurred by us. We call ourselves the *Congregation of the Most Holy Saviour.* At present it is not possible for us to give a mission at your place; for we have so much to do in this vast diocese of Salerno that we cannot go even to Cava which is near us.

As regards the mortifications, I do not wish you to begin them if you are not well. Eat fruit sometimes when you see that it serves as a remedy either for the stomach or in order that you may not eat something else that will disagree with you.

I am much pleased that you have that companion; I counsel you to use all your influence with the Superiors that she may not be taken from you. Be always friendly to her, and always praise her before others. As for the services that appear to you so lowly in regard to the sick, you know that they have been highly prized and honored by the saints; if the senses loath such things, it does not matter; let nature show repugnance and do your duty.

As to the mission, it is impossible at present: the distance is too great.

Finally, if you wish to be consoled, hear this advice: embrace in all things the will of God, and you will always be content.

Pray always for me, who do not forget you. Pray to Jesus and to Mary to send us subjects. I recommend to you three visits every day to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin by offering for the love of them your life and all things; and in these visits give a sigh of love in behalf of my soul, in order that Jesus and Mary may help me to accomplish perfectly the will of God. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After an old copy,

LETTER 33.

To the Same.

Various counsels.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, April 4 [1737].

My dear daughter: I write you hurriedly these few lines in answer to your last letter, as we are very much occupied in the building [of a house at Ciorani]; nearly fifty persons have come through charity to assist us. For this reason thank our Lord for us, and beg him to continue to bless us.

Two good subjects have already come to join the Institute.

What you tell me about your severe carnival and the first Friday of March, gives me pleasure.

As for the foundation, I do not yet say that it is either a temptation or an inspiration. Pray to our Lord to enlighten me, and in the mean time keep yourself entirely resigned,

as if the thing could never succeed. Write, moreover, to the duchess, and inform me of all.

I am pleased with your sister, and her letter delighted me with the beautiful sentiments that she expresses. Cultivate this soul with care, for I hope that she will produce great fruit.

When, my daughter, shall I come to Caiazzo? I do not know; perhaps this may be when we least imagine it. In the mean time, let us love Jesus Christ with all our power, for he is well worthy to be loved. Always pray for me who will not forget you.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very affectionate Father in Jesus and Mary,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI.

After an old copy.

LETTER 34.

To the Same.

He reproaches her for her great repugnance to suffering.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

[The middle of April, 1737.]

As for the journey to Villa, God knows, my dear daughter, when I shall be able to make it, for I cannot leave this place, and I have no occasion to go to Villa.

I rejoiced to hear of the persecutions of which you are the object; but what you add, that you despair of being able to remain longer in that monastery, gives me pain.

If our Lord wishes a new foundation, he will himself open the way, and let us know when he wishes it. But perhaps this is a great temptation to you; I fear it when I see the horrible repugnance that you feel to bear any longer the persecutions of the monastery. You should, however, desire these persecutions. Do you not see that you are now treated as our Lord, and that in watching you so

closely, in keeping you in humility, your Sisters are co-operating in the work of your perfection? And you say after this that you can no longer bear with them!

O my God! what has then become of your desire to suffer for your Spouse, to belong entirely to him? Sister Giovanna, my daughter, nevermore use such language when you speak to me; otherwise you will make me lose the hope of ever seeing you really a saint, and I shall no longer regard you as my daughter.

God wishes you to be a saint, but by means of crosses. In future, far from complaining of being persecuted, do not omit to thank Jesus Christ on this account: even ask him, in all your prayers, to make you live, unceasingly despised by all creatures. Your present aridity is without doubt a chastisement from his hand which is intended to punish your great repugnance to sufferings.

When you are despised or accused, be silent until you are commanded to speak; and in this case, instead of excusing yourself, say that you deserve to be dismissed on account of your imperfections.

Continue to pray for the Institute and for me, and ask God to send us subjects.

To expiate your want of patience, impose upon yourself some supererogatory mortification during eight days, in eating, in taking the discipline, or in wearing the cilicium.

Pray to your divine Spouse to pardon you your want of resignation, and recommend yourself to our Lady of Seven Dolors; she will solicit your pardon.

Write to me, and tell me how you are getting on. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very devoted Father in Jesus and Mary,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI.

After a copy sent by Mgr. Alfonso Giordano, Bishop of Teano.

LETTER 35.

To the Same.

He exhorts her to detach herself from creatures, and offers her advice how to behave towards her sister.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, April 22, 1737.

I have just received your two letters, and I again answer that for the present it is impossible for us to go to your place to give a mission; for our number is small, and we have so much to do here that we can hardly finish. Moreover, it is our rule never to give missions so far away, especially when we have to give them in places that are near us.

I permit you to pray to Jesus Christ as St. Scholastica did; but I forbid you all eagerness to see and to hear me. It may suffice for us to see each other in Paradise in order never to be separated from the beautiful vision of God; while waiting, let us aid each other by prayer, and remain in peace. God only is that good from which we must not be separated. All creatures are creatures that chill in us the love for the supreme good when we desire them with solicitude. I wish, therefore, to help you to unite yourself more and more to Jesus Christ, and not to separate you from him; hence, I desire that henceforth you be more resigned.

What consoles me is that darkness and contempt continue in you. Oh, would to God that in the midst of all the darkness, abandoned and despised by every one, we may have the happiness of loving and pleasing Jesus Christ! In darkness I recommend to you to employ a great part of your meditation in saying prayers to Jesus and to Mary.

Oh, what an excellent meditation is that in which we do not cease to ask of Jesus the love of Jesus!

I send you certain little works of piety with some hymns of my own composition.

As regards your sister, it is necessary that you should neglect nothing to promote her eternal salvation. If there were some means of obtaining a place for her it would not much matter if something should be lost in selling the property. In short, you must take care of this affair, and find out whether the house of your aunt is frequented by a relative or any one else; for in that case, you must cry out against such a thing, create a noise about it and decide upon measures. Do all that you can, but without losing your peace of mind; what you cannot do place in the hands of Jesus Christ.

Continue to recommend me very much to Jesus and to Mary. We are few in number, and at the present time we are nearly all sick. Make a novena to Mary Immaculate that she may procure for us both health and subjects; we shall then go to give a mission at your place.

I also request you to make without intermission acts of love to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. May Mary be our hope, and may Jesus be our love! Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After an old copy.

LETTER 36.

To his Director Mgr. Tommaso Falcoia.

Reflections as to the abandonment of the foundation at Villa degli Schiavi.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, July 12, 1737.

Yesterday Brother Andrea arrived here, bringing good news from Caiazzo, and telling us that Mgr. Vigilante, being ill-disposed towards us, makes no further mention of another foundation.[1] Cheer up, my dear Father, may Jesus Christ send us tribulations in every way; blessed be his name forever! Meanwhile, I see that the devil is endeavoring to cause us trouble from within. Don Giovanni [Mazzini] and Don Andrea [Villani] have written to me in confidence, and I confide it to you as a secret, my dear Father, that it may serve as a guide for you; but when speaking to them, do not mention that they have written to me. In short, I understand that Don Giovanni, judging from the tenor of his letter, has heard that our people are not to return to Caiazzo, and Don Andrea writes to me that he has had many interior and exterior struggles. I hope, nevertheless, that Jesus Christ will not abandon us.

My dear Father, let me get rid of a scruple concerning the foundation at Villa which torments me very much: it is caused by seeing the great abandonment of these poor souls.

[1] Constantino Vigilante, Bishop of Caiazzo, was very much pained at the departure of the Fathers from Villa degli Schiavi, and did all in his power to induce them to return. We cannot ascertain why the bishop was at the time somewhat displeased with the Fathers; at any rate, it is certain that this estrangement did not last very long; for we learn from numerous documents that he was ever very friendly to St. Alphonsus and to the Congregation.

When we went to the prince,[1] he said in the beginning that we could not expect more than the hundred and fifty ducats which had been promised, and that we should go to the delegate, as he did not understand the matter. I saw then, that, though he did not show himself favorable to us, he would not have been offended if the delegate had done us justice. Judging now from what he has said, it seems to me that I should have acknowleged that we could not claim more than the hundred and fifty ducats. My memory is, moreover, confused, and I know no longer whether or not I would have finished by taking leave. But Don Cesare [Sportelli] suddenly came out very boldly and said to the prince: "We have come hither to take leave, and we want nothing else." The prince then dismissed us with bad grace. I could then apply no remedy, since leave had already been taken. But during our journey to Villa, the doubt occurred to me whether I was not able to remedy matters, and whether the leave-taking was according to the intention of your Lordship. Yet I brightened up on the way when I heard of the violence used, for we may safely infer the consent of the prince, and furthermore we may conclude that he was opposed to us. I desired to tell you this in order to lighten my mind of a load. As for the rest, I am satisfied with whatever God has been pleased to do through your Lordship.

I also wish to tell you that we were offered three foundations at Cava and at Vietri, but at the time I did not pay much attention to these offers, as I knew that your Lordship wished to see us united, rather than scattered in other places. But if, my dear Father, you wish that when I have to return to those places, I should select the best house as a new foundation, I shall obey.

1 This was most probably Prince Francesco Carafa, lord of the hamlet Villa degli Schiavi.

But, my dear Father, allow me to express my sentiments on this point.

In the first place, it is necessary henceforward to exercise great caution in accepting foundations of this kind so miserable and wretched; for though it is true that we can relinquish them at our pleasure, still such a proceeding reflects great discredit upon our poor little Institute; for people will say, as the talk now goes at Caiazzo, that we have been expelled.

Then I would ask your Lordship, since we are so few, to keep us together; this consoles me when I think of Villa, for Jesus Christ has allowed us to abandon it without remorse, in order to make us more united. My dear Father, where subjects are only too few (your Lordship already know this, but I have had the experience) regular observance and fervor languish, even perseverance is threatened; to tell the truth, everything grows tepid: for let a subject be absent from choir on account of some affair which is always turning up, such as preaching or hearing confessions, or some other business, of course there can be no choir; this happens pretty often. Moreover, when the choir is made up of so few, one can hardly make out what is said, for the same one must be hebdomadary, antiphonarius, and must intone the psalms. Hence, we never learn to say the Office in the proper manner. Retreats and spiritual exercises are seldom made. For my own part, since I am alone, I do not remember that I have ever been able on a single occasion to make the exercises perfectly, as we were so few, and it was necessary for me to occupy myself with some affair or other. As for the domestic conferences, which are such an assistance to us, one is tempted to give them up; one does not know what to say when so few are to be addressed; all that one can do is to moralize a little, in order not to wound the small audience. The faults of which it is customary for us to accuse ourselves in the refectory, are also few on account of the

paucity of members, and so the accusation on Friday is often omitted. In the same manner the recreations, especially when one is out of humor, are more tiresome than refreshing. The result of all this is relaxed observance on the part of the subjects; and we, my dear Father, have experienced this. We know it from the divisions, from the dispersion and ruin of the subjects at Ciorani; Don Xaverio [Rossi] and Don Giulio [Marocco], to speak the truth, are not what they were, and I have become colder than all the others. It is good to speak of this, not only on our own account, but also on account of the others, who can with difficulty bring themselves to unite with us, because they see that we are so few.

Only yesterday Father Fiorillo wrote me that there is a good foundation at Grotta Goglierma, beyond Sessa. It is a large village in the diocese of Aquino, where we would have a church quite finished, a house with twenty cells, and an abundance of comforts. Father Fiorillo asked me to go thither to inspect the place, for the municipality, he said, wishes to bestow it upon missionaries.

I answered that I had been informed of it. . . . . [The remainder is wanting.]

After the original in the possession of his Eminence Guglielmo Sanfelice, Archbishop of Naples.

LETTER 37.

To Father Cesare Sportelli,[1] at Scala.

Live Jesus and Mary!

CIORANI, August 7, 1737.

My dear Don Cesare: I have received your letter from which I learn that you are somewhat better, though the

[1] Father Cesare Sportelli, a man of saintly life, was born at Mola di Bari in the year 1699. Having passed his course of studies very successfully at Naples, he devoted himself to the study of law, in

fever still continues. Do not forget that favor which I asked you through Father Fusco, in regard to the *Teresian Chronicles*. Try to do this as soon as possible.

Live Jesus and Mary!

ALFONSO.

After the original preserved in the archives of the convent of the Redemptorists, at Pagani.

LETTER 38.

To his Father Don Giuseppe de Liguori.

He begs him to be more charitable to his son D. Ercole, and gives him some advice about his own sanctification.

[The end of October, 1737?]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

My dear Father: I beg you for pity's sake to have a little more charity for your son. This morning he came to see me at Naples,[1] and began in my presence to weep, because he could not do otherwise on account of the grief that afflicts him. My God! do you wish to make him desperate, and cause him to throw himself into a well, or to do some other rash act? For mercy's sake, stop showing your melancholy at table, give him some assistance, since your poor son is now married, exiled from Naples, without any

which, thanks to his great talents, he made wonderful progress. Having discovered that a Congregation under the title of the Most Holy Saviour had been founded, he turned his back upon the world, and became the first companion of St. Alphonsus. In the year 1742 he was chosen to be the first Superior of the house at Pagani, and in the year 1747, of the house at Caposele. He rendered great services on the missions. He died on the 19th of April, 1750. Before he breathed his last he began to sing *In exitu Israel de Egypto*, and in this joyous frame of mind he gave up his spirit to God. He wrought many miracles after his death; three years and six months after his death the body was found beautiful, entire and flexible.

1 In the month of October 1737, the saint was giving a mission at Naples, in the church of the Holy Ghost.

comfort whatsoever. See that you do not make him do any imprudent act; especially should you show charity towards him now that he is sick. Think that he is your son, and not a dog; hence, he should be dearer to you than possessions, than money; and be assured that if charity is practised towards your own family, God will help you in some other way. What do you wish should be done? What is done is done; and has already been arranged *ab æterno* [from all eternity]; upon whom can you lay the blame?

I beg you, dear Father, to be habitually a little more united with God, to go to confession oftener, to prepare your accounts, because when Jesus Christ comes there will then be no time to attend to this matter. Think that you are already advanced in age; who knows within what space of time you will no longer be in this world? and it is certain that this must be, whether you wish it or not. Every morning I recommend you to God at my Mass, for I fear much for your eternal salvation. I hope the Blessed Virgin will assist you; but the Blessed Virgin will not be able to assist you without your co-operation. . . . . .

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 39.

To Father Giuglio Marocco,[1] at Caiazzo.

The saint complains of his silence, and tells him some news.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, March 9 [1738].

My dear Don Giuglio: What is the matter that I have not seen any of your letters for so long a time? The past week we have been at home after two months spent in

1 Father Giuglio Marocco, after the forced departure of the Fathers from Villa degli Schiavi, remained at Caiazzo, his native place, in order to treat of the affairs of their return to Villa.

giving missions. We wish to know how you are, and when we shall have the consolation of seeing you; when you come from the holy house of the Blessed Virgin, we hope that you will come here directly.

We have learned that Columbano[1] has become re-united to his wife; through this union Monsignor di Caiazzo was hoping to obtain his consent for the foundation. I should most sincerely wish you to inform yourself how things stand, without, however, making your desire known.

Present my regards to Don Silvestro and also to Elizabeth; let the latter pray to Jesus and Mary for me; tell her that I do not forget her. Remember me kindly to Monsignor, and recommend me to Jesus Christ and to Mary every morning, especially at Mass.

Here they have begun to build the church.... We hope to get a good Neapolitan subject; recommend him to Jesus Christ. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your servant and brother in Jesus and Mary,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

P. S. I have already written to you that now there is no more question of going to our Lady at Loreto. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the original preserved at Francavilla Fontana in possession of Mgr. Francesco de Fazio, domestic prelate of His Holiness.

1 Prince Francesco Carafa, lord of Villa degli Schiavi, had declared himself against the Fathers. The Princess, his wife, who was very pious, made every effort to secure their return. See letter of May 25, 1759.

LETTER 40.

To a Priest.

It is impossible to give the mission for which he asks. Great desire of seeing him enter the Institute.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

From the mission at CALVANICO,[1] April 27, [1739].

My dear Don Giovanni: I was greatly consoled to receive your most esteemed note, because I thought that you no longer remembered us. But your note proved to me that this is not the case; it proved, on the contrary, that you are thinking of us and of our Institute with real affection. O God! how much assistance you could have given us this year by going with us on the missions, and I had so great a desire to write this to you! But I was told not to do so on account of the disposition of your family and of the bishop. The latter, I believe, will grow somewhat cool towards us on account of what your relatives will have told him; the fact is he will not even send us the candidates for ordination next Pentecost. If you have an occasion do not omit, I beg you, to assure him that in regard to this point we are altogether without fault.

Let us now speak of the mission at Dupino. Dear Giovanni, I have received orders from our Father [Mgr. Falcoia] to retire after the mission at Mercato di Giffoni and to give no other, so that, though we had received a most urgent application from Valle di Giffoni — an extensive and beautiful country — we had to leave the people disconsolate, because no mission was given to them. It, however, happened that for a special reason the archbishop positively wished to have a mission given at Calvanico where I am now; our Father has granted us permission

[1] Calvanico was at that time a village in the diocese of Salerno containing 1568 souls.

to give this mission *tantum* [only], and no more, as he does not wish us to labor any more during the month of May. Now you ask me for a mission at Dupino; but it is too late. The most that I can do to serve you is to send a courier to Castel Montori to obtain permission to go; but I must say to you that such a thing will be impossible on account of the reasons given above. As soon as I receive an answer, Don Cesare [Sportelli] will send it to you. If we cannot go now, we shall wait till the weather becomes cooler. You must thank those gentlemen of the parish for the honor that they have done us. Had they notified me before, I could have taken more suitable measures to serve them.

To return to ourselves. Do not forget us or the Institute. Whatever you may do, you may be sure a good rewarder will pay you; I say no more. Ah, my dear Giovanni, my dear Giovanni! Let me at least know at what time, with the consent of your family and of your bishop, you will be able to help us on the missions; let me know this, so that I may send you word when the missions are to be given. *Messis quidem multa* [the harvest is great]. . . especially for the coming year; oh, what a harvest is awaiting us! There is especially Eboli where there are six thousand souls; and our services have been asked for S. Lorenzo della Padula where there are also six thousand souls. Well then! pray to Jesus and Mary for us, and particularly for me. Asking you to write to me, I remain, etc.

Your very humble and very devoted servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI.

After the original kept at Dragonea in the diocese of Cava.

LETTER 41.

To Father Giulio Marocco.

He writes to him to prolong his stay at Caiazzo.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

CIORANI, [June 1739].

My dear Giulio: When you wrote to me I was absent on a mission. Then Father Cesare [Sportelli] answered you for me, and begged that you would write about the matter to our Father [Mgr. Falcoia]. But now this is no longer necessary, since I have spoken to Monsignor. He says that you should stay at Caiazzo as long as the doctors say that it is necessary for your health. Pray to Jesus and Mary for me.

Salute for me Monsignor [Vigilante], and tell him that we soon expect him and Don Silvestro; be cheerful; for pity's sake, be courageous, take exercise, and do not trouble yourself about anything. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your devoted brother and servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After the original preserved at Naples in the Oratory of the Archconfraternity of our Lady of Mercy.

LETTER 42.

To the Same.

He hopes to see him soon again at Ciorani, and begs him to recommend to our Lady of Loreto himself and the Institute.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, [End of July, 1739].

My dear Giulio: I was waiting a long time for news from you, and at last I received it. We rejoice that your health

is better. We should like to know when we shall have the consolation of receiving you here.

The priest in question wished to enter this summer; as, however, by entering he would have to make the exercises, our Father [Mgr. Falcoia] wished his entrance to be postponed. He will come towards the second week of September.

Know that on the 15th of October I shall begin a retreat to the clergy at Naples, and after that I shall return home. If during this time you would be able to arrange about coming here, my consolation would be redoubled. If not, may God's will be done!

After having written this, I heard that our Father has granted you permisson to go to our Lady of Loreto. I am glad of this; pray to this good Mother for me, for our companions and for our Institute, and go to her with great confidence that she may give you either good health or perfect resignation. I suppose that you will go by the way of the Abruzzi in order to avoid the mountainous countries.

I have nothing more to say. May we meet again immediately after your trip.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your brother and servant,

ALFONSO LE LIGUORI.

After the original preserved in the diocese of Teano.

LETTER 43.

To Most Reverend Casimiro Rossi,[1] Archbishop of Salerno.

He asks for faculties for the exercise of the apostolic ministry.

[CIORANI, December 26, 1739.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Most Reverend and respected Sir: I write this letter to ask your Grace for two favors in regard to the faculties. The first is this: Your Grace will remember that for a priest of the diocese whose faculties for hearing confessions, granted for six months, were shortly to expire, you granted me an extension as long as the missions would last. Now as the same thing will often happen, and will in fact happen as I understand in the case of some confessors in the missions that are about to be given, I beg your Grace to concede to me also for the future, *the same extension, in a similar case, to approved confessors for the time only during which they assist me on the mission.*

The other favor is this: The evening that I spent at Salerno it seems to me that your Grace allowed me the faculty of employing any one whom I believe fit to help me to hear confessions in the monasteries of nuns; but as on that evening I was so much occupied at the moment that afterwards I did not remember how I had formulated my request on this point, I now beg your Grace for the peace of my conscience to declare to me that you grant me *the faculty of hearing confessions in said monasteries, and of asking any one whom I think suitable also to hear confessions, with the same faculties granted to me for the missions* when I happen to give the exercises or when I preach in the said monasteries.

[1] Casimiro Rossi, born at Naples, March 11, 1685, was first bishop of Taranto, then from May 5, 1738 archbishop of Salerno, where he died in 1759.

For my greater tranquillity and for your convenience it will be sufficient, and I beg you that below you inform me that the aforesaid faculties are granted. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph! While humbly prostrating myself at your feet, I have the honor to remain,

Most Reverend Sir,

Your very humble, very devoted,
and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

The archbishop answered in the same letter: "The two faculties asked for, as expressed in this letter, are granted. December 28, 1739.

CASIMIRO, Archbishop."

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 44.

To a Nun at Fisciano, in the Diocese of Salerno.

He exhorts her never to omit Communion, notwithstanding all her temptations.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CASTELLAMMARE,[1] January 6, 1740.

How much am I pained that you have so little faith in obedience, notwithstanding what I have told you and repeated so often! One thing in your letter has, however, consoled me, that in spite of all this you have not given up Communion.

I beg you, and I command you, never to omit holy

[1] The saint had given a mission at Fisciano in the month of November, 1739. He gave another at Castellammare in the parish of S. Salvatore at the beginning of 1740, and it is from this town that he writes the present letter.

Communion, even when it should seem to you that you are giving consent to every temptation in the world. For pity's sake, do not treat your Spouse as a tyrant who wishes you evil, and who wishes to punish the soul that is anxious to seek him and not to displease him.

If you cannot swear at first sight to have deliberately consented to the temptation, and consented to lose God, always go blindly (I take it on my conscience) to Communion, in spite of all disquietudes, and even if you believe you are committing a sacrilege. Act thus; you will no doubt suffer, but you will not on that account be less pleasing to Jesus Christ, since it is only to please him and to obey him that you communicate.

In your Communions and prayers, do not forget the agreement that we have made with each other; on my part, I pray and will earnestly pray for you to this good Master, for I see that you are very dear to him; yes, very dear, although you do not know this. Could you not convince yourself of this? You would then become, miserable creature that you are, grateful to this God your Creator who bears towards you so tender a love.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI.

After the original in possession of the Carmelites of Fisciano.

LETTER 45.

To the Venerable Gennaro Sarnelli.[1]

He gives him advice in regard to the composition of spiritual books.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, April 3, 1740.

My dear Gennaro: We are distressed on account of Father Xavier [Rossi] whose illness has grown much worse, causing him to lose more blood than before. To-day, however, he is a little better. May God spare him to us!

I have read what you have written to me. My dear Gennaro, I have, however, very little time, and soon I must go to Nocera to preach some sermons; besides I am not very well. It would, indeed, be a great work for me to collect those small treatises about the Heart of Jesus and the Passion. I shall do what I can.

I have told Brother Gennaro [Rendina] to copy the canticles, because I have not time to do so myself; but I shall revise them. In the canticle of the *Desolate Soul* it will suffice that you change the strophe arranged by Fontana as follows:

[1] This great servant of God, born at Naples, September 12, 1702, entered the rising Congregation in September 1733. He was a living image of the holy founder, so that like him he lived only for God and the good of souls, for the salvation of whom he always labored with incomparable zeal and ardor, with the living voice of preaching, and with the publication of many celebrated works. Finally, after eleven years of apostolic labors, worn out by fatigue and austerities, he rendered his beautiful soul to God. The cause of his Beatification was introduced by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, December 3, 1874.

E se per me non mai
Vi fosse, o Dio, perdono,
Sappi che tua pur sono
E sempre tua sarò.[1]

As for the pious meditations on the Passion, the Blessed Sacrament, etc., of which you speak, I wish you to fill them with affections, rather than with citations, revelations and reflections; for in this kind of meditations one should exercise the will more than the understanding; and what devout persons require more, are affections and not considerations.

Particularly in the meditation on the Passion, when the meditation is on Jesus bound by the executioners, let the prayer be: O Jesus deign to bind us with the chains of Thy love, etc. You will find a similar aspiration written in the paper I send you.

To Jesus covered with wounds by the scourging, the prayer may be as follows; May he wound us with his love, since all these wounds cry for and demand only love, as our Lord himself one day said to Sister Vittoria Angelini.

To Jesus crowned with thorns: May he reign over our hearts and our affections, etc.

To Jesus dying: May he make us die to all the affections of the world.

To Jesus wounded in his heart by a lance: May he wound us, etc.

Read the book entitled: "Sufferings of Jesus;"[2] you will find in it very beautiful aspirations. See also the exercises

[1] E'en though there be no hope for me,
My God, I'll love Thee still;
Though lost, my love shall e'er be Thine,
For only Thou my heart canst fill.

[2] This work, written in Portuguese by the Venerable servant of God, Father Thomas of Jesus, of the Order of St. Augustine, was translated into Italian by Father Louis Flori, S. J. [into French by Father Alleaume, S. J.]

which the author gives after the reflections. I conclude. When you have read them give them to Jorio for me.

I will send you later the other affections and the canticles drawn from the "Book of Canticles." Recommend me to Jesus and Mary.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 46.

To the Foundress of a Monastery of Nuns at Saragnano.

Necessity of establishing perfect observance from the beginning, especially in regard to poverty.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, July 12, 1740.

Reverend and honored Mother: I regret exceedingly not to have been able to give you before your departure some useful counsels for the good of the new foundation and for the glory of Jesus Christ. I have therefore thought that I would send you the counsels in writing.

I would say to you in the first place: Prepare yourself to suffer much for Jesus Christ, if you wish that this foundation should be made according to his design. You will have to suffer poverty; you will have to endure persecutions, not so much from outsiders as from those that are within; because the latter are accustomed to live according to their own fancy, and as soon as they see themselves restricted by the Rule, there will be among them malcontents who will murmur and create disturbance; there will also be some who will take their departure. But let those go away with full liberty who do not wish to observe the Rule punctually. It will not matter if you remain alone; Jesus and Mary will come to your aid.

Consider that you have to implant the spirit of fervor which is always to endure in future. But if now you begin

to relax, either through human respect, or through fear that complaints will be made, or that some will leave you, remember that the foundation will go from bad to worse.

In all other points, be full of charity towards all the Sisters, especially the sick; try to be the servant of all, and make them understand that you bear great love towards each one of them, because love, and not force, is an excellent means of rendering them docile and obedient. But when you see that any one obstinately resists obedience, and especially the Rule, dismiss her resolutely, and implore the help of the bishop, asking him to support you in this matter, which is absolutely of the first importance.

Keep always before your eyes, Reverend Mother, the beautiful reward that awaits you in heaven if you maintain observance, and the severe chastisement that will, on the contrary, be inflicted upon you if, in order to condescend to the weakness of some Sister, you introduce inobservance by scandalizing the others. And what is not done now, you should despair of doing later, since fervor will always diminish rather than increase.

Take care to instruct more by example than by words. Be the first to observe all the Rules, and as to the observance, lay aside everything else. It is on the observance, understand this well, that the sanctity of this foundation depends.

Watch particularly over the observance of poverty, and *absolutely*, *absolutely*, *absolutely*, permit no one to retain anything as her own, not even a needle, if there is no real necessity. Let everything be in common, as is required by the Rule. Do not allow anything to be kept in the rooms that is not strictly necessary. Fruit, sweetmeats, jewels! Of what use will all this be, if not to make us suffer years and years in purgatory? For a much greater reason should you forbid the keeping of linen, of money, or of any

other object, even if it has been received as a present. Let all presents be for the benefit of the Community.

Be on your guard, for if now you do not establish good customs, it will afterwards be impossible for you to remove bad ones. Recall to mind what I preached at Fisciano where some abuse had been introduced; and you know what it cost to remove it.

Endeavor also to suppress as much as can be done all talking in the parlor, and see to it that the *listeners* be always present. A monastery in which poverty is observed and in which the grate is closed, is a holy monastery.

Consider, Reverend Mother, that there is now for you question either of becoming a saint or of being damned. Give as much time as possible to prayer, for you stand very much in need of it, and exhort the others without intermission to pray before the Blessed Sacrament and at the feet of Mary, because on this everything depends. Tell the Sisters that all those that begin a foundation usually become saints when they strive to please Jesus Christ.

I already know that in order to execute what I have just written, you will have much to suffer; but it cannot be otherwise. If the members of the Community do not wish to obey you, frankly declare to them and to the bishop that you wish to return to Fisciano where you can have more peace and where you will be in less danger of damning your soul.

Have this letter read by the Sister who is your companion in this undertaking. Your Rule forbids flesh-meat. If you can settle this point, you will do well; so it is practised in the monastery of Tramonti.

Trust in the Lord and fear nothing, even if you see the whole world leagued against you on the question of observance. I hope that all that I have just said to you will be for you at the hour of death a subject of consolation, and not a subject of remorse. May you both recommend me to

Jesus and to Mary; on my part, I will not forget you in my prayers.

May Jesus be our love and Mary our hope!

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After an old copy.

LETTER 47.

To Father Giulio Marocco.

He expresses to him his satisfaction in knowing that he is resolved to persevere in his vocation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, July 12, [1740].

My dear Giulio: I have received your letter which we were longing to receive; and it has consoled us all. This is enough to understand the rest.

Dear Giulio, what frightened us in your letter was not so much the sentence: *I wish first of all to see my health restored,* as the sentence: *for God has clearly made known to me that he wishes me to be in the Institute, not as a sick, but as a healthy man* It is this thought joined to one of your old temptations already known, namely, that you are not made for the Institute if you are sick, it was this thought, I say, that frightened us. As for the words *clearly made known,* they made us think that you had consulted some *rabbi.* But let there be no more of this. We are all of us consoled, and our fear has rendered more intense our desire of seeing you very soon.

For the rest, as this consolation to see us must necessarily be deferred, we as well as you must have patience. You may freely attend to the care of your health, as our Father

[Mgr. Falcoia] has already expressed this to you, and has, I believe, confirmed it in another letter.

In regard to the Masses, please to answer Don Giovanni [Mazzini],[1] so as to take away all scruples. In short, do not give a thought as to whether or not you have celebrated the Masses, whether or not you have incurred expenses; and I say again to you most sincerely that you may send me word for anything that you may need, and Jesus Christ will provide.

You tell me not to write to you as I have done; and I beg Don Giulio, for pity's sake, not to write to me as he has done; that he should not frighten us again, saying that he wished to leave us. Come now! no more of this. Let the whole of what has been said be buried in the bottom of the sea.

I shall read in recreation this evening your *Maccaronica*. In the mean time recommend me to Jesus Christ and write us where you are and how you are.

I conclude by embracing you in the hearts of Jesus and of Mary. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble brother in Jesus and Mary,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After the original in possession of Don Pasquale Petrella, Primicerius of the Metropolitan Chapter of Capua.

[1] Father Giovanni Mazzini had the charge of applying the intentions of the Masses.

LETTER 48.

To his Director Monsignor Tommaso Falcoia.[1]

CIORANI, July 24, 1740.

My dear Father: I am cold; please send me a little of your fire; at least tell me what I have to do and bless me. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your very humble son,

ALFONSO.

After the original in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 49.

To Father Giulio Marocco.

He tenderly exhorts him to return to Ciorani, as he is certain about his vocation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, August 2, [1740].

My dear Don Giulio: I fear that the letters that I am writing to you at present are becoming wearisome to you. But what can I do? The affection that I bear towards one of the first and oldest companions of this little Congregation impels me to write again.

We have been expecting to receive from Naples the papers or the letters about which you wrote us, but nothing has yet come.

What prompts me to write you to-day is a note of the Bishop of Caiazzo in which, writing to his sister, the Prioress of S. Giorgio, he says expressly of you: "Neither I nor any one else has put any obstacle in the way of Don Giulio's return to the Institute; on the contrary, I have been the first to urge him to enter it. Although I regarded

1 This short note is the postcript to a letter of Don Cesare Sportelli, in which he announces to the bishop that on the 21st of July all the Fathers and Brothers of Ciorani had made their profession.

him not only as useful, but necessary, yet I did not wish to charge my conscience with scruples in regard to his vocation."

Since now the bishop has approved your vocation, there is no longer any hindrance to your return.

Your vocation was afterwards approved by Father Fiorillo to whom, as your director, you referred the matter.

Monsignor Falcoia has found one of your notes in which you mention to him the resolution that you have made and the approbation that you have received.

Not to weary you, what are you doing at Caiazzo? What resolution did you make?

For pity's sake, do not take counsel at Naples, nor elsewhere, because if Mgr. Falcoia heard of this he would no more receive you. You were so detached from your relatives, why allow yourself to be overcome by the devil and the flesh? Do you wish to act as Alteriis[1] acted, whose behavior you once condemned? Nevertheless he had against him the archbishop, who obliged him to remain in his diocese.

Do you perhaps believe that we shall not receive you with the same affection that we received you before? Here you will find more than brothers, more than a mother. Here all are sighing for you, although you have almost discarded us who are your companions.

For pity's sake, do not give any more time to the enemy to gain you over. What a fine excuse you make about your family! Say to them that you wish to obtain counsel at Naples. But you should consult Jesus Christ and at once you would come to Ciorani.

I beg you for the love of the Blessed Virgin to return immediately on receiving this letter. Who knows, if you were perhaps no longer in Caiazzo, you would be cured

[1] Michele de Alteriis, after having finished his novitiate, left the Congregation at the instance of his father.

of your infirmities? We of course know that you will be nearly useless, but here you will find us all charity. And though you are useless, we receive and desire you, not because you are useless, but because you are our companion, and we do not wish you to be separated from us.

I have nothing more to say. After you have read this, consult the crucifix and take a resolution at the foot of it, but at once, and do not rise, I command you, before you have decided. And come just as you are.[1] Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very devoted father and brother in Jesus Christ,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After the original preserved in the diocese of Teano.

LETTER 50.

To Father Cesare Sportelli, at Ciorani.

He begs him to write to several monasteries in favor of a religious vocation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

S. ANIELLO,[2] July 12, [1741].

Don C. has told me through D. G. that there is a good priest named D. L. who would come here; he is most anxious to enter the Congregation; but he has with him a sister who is as pure as an angel. As she does not wish to marry, he is in search of a convent where she may enter as a lay-sister.

I am going to write to Cava, to Fisciano, and to the

1 This altogether paternal letter produced no effect upon Father Marocco; after the lapse of one month he left definitely the Institute, to which he was, however, not bound by any vow.

2 Sant' Aniello, a village in the neighborhood of Naples, where the saint remained for the mission to be given in the suburbs of the city.

convent of the Purità at Nocera. Let Father Andrea [Villani] be so kind as to write in my name to the Carmelites at Pagani and to those at Penta. Let him also write to the Carmelites at Solofra and ask Vigilante to engage the services of the primicerius who has great influence.

I hope your Reverence will also do me the favor of writing to these three places: to San Giorgio, to endeavor to gain over Polichetti; to Solofra, to the Franciscan Sisters; to Nocera; to the Convent of St. Clare at Nocera. Write also to Tripaldi, and even, if you think it advisable, to Serino. You must say that she is my penitent; that she is truly an angel from Paradise, but poor in this world's goods; and that it is I myself that urges her case most strongly. Please write these letters very soon, and have them forwarded at once.

I embrace you all in Jesus and Mary. Let Father Xavier not tire himself too much before he has fully regained his health.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 51.

To the Priest Don Giuseppe Sparano,[1] at Naples.

He asks him to come to him for a moment's interview.

Live Jesus and Mary!

S. ANIELLO, July 29, [1741].

My dear Don Giuseppe: I should like to ask an important favor of you. If you would be kind enough when you go

[1] The priest D. Giuseppe Sparano, always a great friend of our saint, was born at Naples, December 22, 1709. In 1743 on account of his rare qualities he was chosen Canon of the Metropolitan church, synodal examiner, and later Superior of the Congregation of the Apostolic Missions, called *Propaganda*. In 1758, he published his "Historical Memoirs of the Church of Naples, and of that

to S. Aniello on your way to S. Sebastiano to grant me a moment's interview, you would do me a great favor.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After an old copy.

LETTER 52.

To Father Cesare Sportelli, at Ciorani.

He expresses to him his desire of promptly returning to Ciorani.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

S. ANIELLO, June 22, [1742].

My dear Father Cesare: If you do not send me Brother Gennaro [Rendina], I shall not be able to send you Brother Leonardo [Cicchetti]; for it is impossible for one Brother to work in the kitchen, to make purchases, and to serve the great number of Masses that are said here.

Nothing new has occurred here. Father Giovanni [Mazzini] is better. About July 3, he will go first to Castellammare and then to Ciorani.

Let all of you recommend me to Jesus Christ, and do so especially during the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Tell all that they should pray to our Lord that if it be conducive to his glory, he may deliver me from Naples.[1]

The Cardinal has not yet returned; when he returns, I will speak to him. I am, however, afraid, that he will not allow us to go away for good; we shall likely have to come

of the Congregation of the Apostolic Missions" (2 vols.) May 29, 1775, he was preconized Archbishop of Acerenza and Matera, and died the following year.

[1] Cardinal Spinelli refused to let St. Alphonsus depart, as he had placed the direction of the diocesan missions in his charge.

and go, as the saying is. I remain, etc. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 53.

To the Same.

Various requests to be forwarded to Mgr. Falcoia.

[CIORANI, October 26, 1742.]

. . . . . I wish to tell you that yesterday morning, through the mercy of Jesus Christ, the Archbishop [of Salerno] sent us twenty ducats[1] as an alms, and published at the same time an order that all the candidates for ordination and those *in sacris* [in Orders] are to make a retreat of ten days, either at Ciorani or at the *Vergini*.[2] Now since it would seem strange and improper to countermand the exercises in accordance with what our Father [Mgr. Falcoia] has ordered, after they have been arranged, what is to be done? This Don Xavier [Rossi] would like to know, so as to prepare the house. He desires permission to make the necessary arrangements, and see to the removal of the prohibition to do the slightest work on the new building.

As for the missions, there are three to be given at Montuoro, which I should like to give consecutively; it would please me very much if your Reverence were to come. Write to our Father and send me as quickly as possible his answer, whether he wishes us to begin on All Saints, or at some other time appointed by him. . . . .

Transcribed by Father Sportelli in a letter addressed by him to Mgr. Falcoia, October 27, 1742.

[1] About 85 francs.

[2] This was the residence of the Lazarists, named from the quarter where they lived.

LETTER 54.

To Don Matteo Greco.

Method of making mental prayer.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

December 10, 1742.

Abridgment of a method of making mental prayer.

Mental prayer has three parts; namely: preparation, meditation, and conclusion.

I. As to the preparation, it contains three acts: 1. Of faith, in adoring God who is present; 2. Of humility, in humbling ourselves before God and asking his pardon; 3. Of petition for light, in asking God for light for the love of Jesus and Mary, so as to make the meditation well.

Having then said a *Hail Mary* to the Blessed Virgin, we pass on to the meditation.

II. In regard to meditation, we must note several things:

First, it is well for us to read that point of the meditation which makes us more recollected, and on which we are more inclined to think; but when we find ourselves moved by some pious sentiment, we should then cease to read and should occupy ourselves with gathering the fruits of the meditation which are as follows:

There are three fruits of meditation; namely: (1) the affections, (2) prayers, and (3) resolutions.

As for the 1., the will of the soul should occupy itself sweetly, without violence in making affections towards Jesus and Mary, etc., acts of confidence, humility, contrition, love, resignation, or oblation, etc.; since the affections are inflamed in meditation, the soul is also inflamed and unites itself to God. This is the principal fruit of meditation.

As to the 2., the soul should try to obtain from Jesus and Mary, etc., the graces that it needs, not only in general, but in particular, as the conquering of some vice, the love

of God, holy perseverance, etc. And such a method of making meditation is very useful, and even necessary, especially during the time of aridity, or when our affections are not moved. Then it is best for us to humble ourselves, be resigned, and ask the divine Goodness for mercy; otherwise there is the danger that we either give up meditation because it is tedious, or derive very little profit from it.

As to the 3., before finishing the meditation we should always make or renew some particular resolution of overcoming some more than ordinary defect or practise some virtue that is more useful to us.

III. As regards the conclusion, it is made briefly by these acts:

1. We should thank Jesus and Mary for the lights received.

2. We should offer to God through Jesus and Mary the acts and the resolutions that we have made.

We should pray to the Lord through the love of Jesus and Mary to give us strength to keep our resolutions.

As to speaking more fully about meditation, and the method of making it, we may read the "Guida spirituale" [Spiritual Guide], of [Ludovico] da Ponte, or the "Mondo santificato" [World Sanctified], of Sarnelli.[1]

Live Jesus and Mary!

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After the original preserved at Salerno, in possession of Signora D. Angiolina Gargano, *née* Greco.

[1] A work written by Ven. Gennaro Sarnelli, 2 vols. in 12mo (Naples, Festa Brothers.)

LETTER 55.

To the King of Naples.

Petition for a foundation of a house at Pagani.

[Towards the end of the year 1742.]

We the undersigned secular priests, Alfonso de Liguori, Cesare Sportelli, Giovanni Mazzini, Andrea Villani, who with other companions are united in the sentiments of mutual charity and zeal for the salvation of souls, especially of the most abandoned that live in the country and poor hamlets, where the necessity is very great and the spiritual help is very little, most humbly represent to your Majesty the following facts:

Since the year 1732, we have been living together for the before-mentioned end, in the city of Scala, in a church and house, to the great profit of its people. But as we have found out that the situation, owing to the rugged mountains, is most inconvenient to the people who are desirous of being benefited by our services, and is most injurious to the health of the subjects who have become ill, because of the great cold that exists there, we are anxious to build at Nocera de' Pagani, at some distance from the inhabited places, a house and a chapel to which the people of the surrounding country may easily come and find the spiritual help necessary for their souls. We therefore supplicate the clemency of your Majesty to deign to grant us permission to erect for the end mentioned the aforesaid house and chapel, being ready to leave them at the least sign of your Majesty, of whose great piety and zeal for the salvation of the souls of your beloved vassals we hope to obtain the favor asked.

In the mean time, humbly prostrate before your royal throne, we promise that we shall always pray to the divine Majesty for the welfare of your kingdom.

After an old copy.

LETTER 56.

To his Father D. Giuseppe de Liguori.

He informs him of the state of his health. — Various counsels.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, March 28, [1743?].

I received your esteemed letter, as also the chocolate, for which I thank you very much. Through the grace of Jesus Christ I find myself in good health, and to-morrow I shall go to Salerno to give the retreat to the clergy. Affairs here are in the same state.

If you wish to buy some lives of the saints, buy the large Life of St. Aloysius de Gonzaga, which has just been published; the Life of St. Philip Neri, and if you can find it, the Life of St. Pascale or of St. Peter of Alcantara. Procure also a little book called the "Eternal Truths," by Rossignoli, and the "Eternal Maxims," by Cattaneo.

I conclude by prostrating myself at your feet and asking you for your blessing. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 57.

To Father Cesare Sportelli, Superior of the House at Pagani.

The saint furnishes him with arguments against the adversaries of the Community of Pagani.[1]

[CIORANI, 1744.]

Live Jesus and Mary!

This morning I was in so great trouble and haste that I forgot to send you the treatise on alms which I think you would like to have.

[1] To understand the reason for the citations given here, it is necessary to consult what Tannoia in his "Life of St. Alphonsus"

Passerini says (Book vi. of the Decretals): *We give the name damage only to that which injures a right acquired, and not to that which may injure a contingent right. Consequently it matters little whether certain persons should no longer receive the alms that they now receive, for these depend on the free will of the donors.*[1] Resting on this saying, he quotes a number of Doctors whose names I have not set down, and brings forward decision 32 of the Rota, n. 32 and 33, part 9, *Recentiorum.*

Speaking specially of the opposition made by the parish priests, he says: *Even should the parish see that the alms are failing it, one should prefer the spiritual profit to the profit proceeding from the alms; otherwise no religious Order could be anywhere established.*[2] He cites in support of this Pasqualigo and Frances.

In a word, he says that *what should be well considered is the spiritual good that is done to the places.*[3] And this point having been once established, the bishop is not even obliged to *call together those that are interested.*[4] He says this at

has written of the opposition made to the Fathers of the Institute, in order to crush the new foundation at Pagani: "To jealousy there were added wrath and rancor; self-interest also came into play. When the Regulars perceived the great veneration and deference paid to our members, they began to persuade themselves that their daily alms were on the point of ceasing; in the same manner the priests feared that all legacies, not only Masses that might be said, but donations, etc., would flow into the coffers of the missionaries. Thus self-interest and jealousy took possession of the hearts of the clergy. And in a short time seculars were also infected with the poison. . . . ." — Book ii. chap. xvii.

1 "Detrimentum consideramus in jure quæsito, et non quærendo; unde non est attendendum quod alii non recipiunt eleemosynas, quas in præsenti recipiunt, quia hæ sunt in libertate elargientium." — Cap. un. *De excess. Prælat.* n. 49, tom. 3).

2 "Præferentes est profectus spiritualis lucro eleemosynarum; aliter nulla Religio ullibi erigi posset." — *Num.* 55, d. l.

3 "Attendendum est utile locorum spirituale." — *Num.* 68.

4 "Ad vocandum interesse habentes."

n. 37. resting on decision 742 of the Rota, part 2, *Recent.* And the bishop is not obliged to *institute a process.*[1] — Pignatelli is of the same opinion as Cespedes, Donato, Lezana, and Pasqualigo, who say: *It is not necessary to institute a tribunal if the place is rich enough that all may find a means of living.*[2]

On this same subject of alms Rotario (*Theol. Moral. Regularium* lib. 3, cap. 5, punct. 4, n. 3), cites a decision of Farinaccio (tom. 2, part. 2, decis. 745) by which, notwithstanding the opposition of the interested parties who were besides mendicant religious, a new convent could be established with the right of having Masses and burials. The reason alleged was that things of this kind were left free to every one.

Tamburini, Cespedes, Bordoni, cited by Pignatelli (d. l. n. 54), also say that *no regard should be had to the diminution of alms; for these being naturally very uncertain, there exists only an accidental damage.*[3] They adduce in proof the decision 745, adding with Alexander: *One should not on account of an imaginary diminution of alms hinder a public work of public utility.*[4]

Still, it is true, that Pignatelli is of a contrary opinion, as he brings forward a decision of the Rota; but there was question of building a new monastery with all its immunities and privileges, especially the privilege of saying Mass before the parochial Mass had been said.

The decision was given in this sense on account of the proximity of the two churches; and Don Andrea was told

1 "Nec tenere formare processum."

2 "Non est necessaria citatio, si opulentia loci satis est ad sustentationem omnium." — Tom. 1, consult. 179, num. 50.

3 "Diminutio eleemosynarum, cum sint valde incerta, idcirco est præjudicium accidentale."

4 "Ob imaginariam diminutionem eleemosynarum, non est impediendum opus publicum in publicam utilitatem."

at Salerno that this practice obtained in France where affairs are regulated in a different manner.

If you still desire texts, I will send them to you afterwards.

It is very necessary at this juncture to be as careful as possible not to offend the bishop or the vicar. I say, *as careful as possible*, for it would be folly to lose their favor at present. Try then to obtain justice more by love than by fear.

With regard to appeals, it is necessary to ponder that point well, otherwise we should give offence to the bishop.

If there even be a contrary decree of *Nihil innovare* [no innovation], one may have recourse to *Contrario Imperio* [contrary judgment], *Reclamazione* [counter claims], etc. Then in case of extreme necessity recourse may be had to the power of appeal.

If I find a good opportunity, I will send you the authentic Act.[1]

May Jesus and Mary bless us all. Live Jesus and Mary!

Try to collect as many proofs as you can, showing the great number of Masses. You will see that our adversaries will try to make capital out of the decrease in the number of Masses and in the concourse of the people, basing their arguments on Pignatelli, etc., as in the decision given above.

Then you must come out boldly with Passerini, Rotario, and the decision of Farinaccio, quoted by the latter.

You can reply in regard to the decision of Pignatelli that there existed particular circumstances, and that, moreover, there was question of a new monastery with its immunities and privileges.

Moreover, Passerini says that the Bull of Pope Gregory [XV.] without regard to the diminution of alms, requires

1 That is to say, the decree by which the Bishop of Nocera, Mgr. Nicolò di Dominicis, approved of the establishment of the house and church at Pagani.

only that no positive wrong should be done to those that had established themselves before.

If it be in any way possible, do not mention Pignatelli.

Remember that a *Nihil innovetur*[1] [prohibition to do anything new] would not at present prevent us from building, as the request was to the effect that the blessing of the church should be impeded.

I do not as yet send the report[2] of the blessing, because the bearer is a mere boy. I shall wait for a better opportunity. Live Jesus and Mary!

Do not forget the man who wished to give three hundred ducats; he should begin to give something as soon as possible. You have to work hard; for it is necessary that the work on the church be hastened; Don Xavier [Rossi] torments me, as he finds himself very much embarrassed; he does not know where to borrow more money. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your brother and servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After the original in the possession of Father Cosma Lojodice, an Augustinian.

[1] The adversaries of the Congregation, in fact, obtained from the royal counsel a decision forbidding anything new to be done. — *Tannoia*, book ii. chap. xxii.

[2] In this Act the bishop speaks of the blessing of the first stone of the church: "The blessing," says the prelate, "which we charged our Vicar-general, Don Nicola Ferri, to give, was in fact solemnly given in the month of last June, in the midst of a large number of people whose transports of joy recalled those of David singing and dancing before the Ark of the Lord. . . ."

LETTER 58.

To Nicola Maria Celestino de Robertis.[1]

Exhortation to correspond at once to God's call.

Praised be the Most Blessed Sacrament, and Mary Immaculate![2]

CIORANI, March 15, 1744.

Having had knowledge of your good resolution or rather inclination as to your vocation, I have been astonished that you have communicated it to others and not to me whom as the Superior it concerned principally. It has also been the cause of no little regret that you have been advised to wait a long time before you follow your vocation, as this would expose you to the great danger of losing it. For in matters of this kind when the devil is not able to divert one entirely from carrying out a good design, he nevertheless aims at inducing one to defer it. He has then succeeded many a time in making one lose the best vocation.

After what I have heard, your vocation in view of the circumstances appears to me as evidently to have come

[1] The following notice may be read in the catalogue of the Congregation about this holy subject: "July 10, 1745, there was admitted into the novitiate Celestino de Robertis, born May 19, 1719, in the town of Sieti, district of Giffoni, in the diocese and province of Salerno, not having yet received any of the Holy Orders. He made his profession into the hands of our Father, July 9, 1746, in our house of Santa Maria della Consolazione, at Iliceto. He died in the odor of sanctity in our house at Caposele, April 20, 1807. He so loved the Blessed Virgin that with one of his little pictures he worked prodigies, and when he desired to receive graces from her he used to say: 'Do me this favor.' He spent the greatest part of the day in prayer."

[2] The saint was then occupied in writing the little work "The Visits to the Most Holy Sacrament, and to the Blessed Virgin, for Every Day in the Month." He therefore changed his usual exclamation "Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!" into this: "Praised be the Most Holy Sacrament, and Mary Immaculate!"

from God. It is, therefore, certain that your salvation depends on your fidelity in following it. Hence I wish you to come as soon as possible to have an interview with me, as I hope to be able to shorten your road considerably, provided you persevere in the good sentiments you now exhibit. As soon as you have decided on the course you wish to pursue, there will not be wanting to you such facilities as will aid you to come to me by visiting some place in the neighborhood, by offering as pretext that you wish to speak about some scruple of conscience, or by saying that you wish to make a day's retreat. You are old enough and you possess common sense; you will surely find some way of coming to see me. You also know that in such cases when there is question of obeying the voice of God one must be courageous and do violence to one's self, and that it does not matter whether or not we displease our relatives, provided only we please God and secure the salvation of our souls.

I fear that my letter may be of no benefit to you, since having been advised to put off for a long time the step you intended to take, you have either changed your mind or you have allowed your fervor to cool. This will not matter, as my letter will at least recall to your mind the voice which Jesus Christ has made you hear, telling you that you should belong entirely to him, or these lines will enable you to perceive the desire I have to confirm you in your resolution. Moreover, if you cannot come at once, please send an answer to me in the same way that I shall employ in forwarding this letter to you, in order that I may learn whether you still persevere in your sentiments and whether I may not assist you according to my power. In the mean time I beg you again to recommend yourself in this matter to Jesus Christ in your holy Communions and in your daily prayers; for I have confidence that you have not given up the practice of prayer. If you have, however, omitted

prayer you must again devote yourself to it with renewed fervor, especially in order that you may succeed in carrying out your design. Begin, besides, a novena in honor of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin that she may inspire you to do what will be conducive to your eternal salvation, and what will console you most at the hour of death.

I do not doubt that you will favorably receive this letter which gives testimony of the esteem in which I hold you personally, and of the great desire I have of seeing you belong entirely to God. I earnestly recommend to you to keep secret this letter and your vocation from every one, whoever he may be; because when such things are once manifested, the devil always finds means of opposing you or at least of cooling your ardor by beginning himself to talk by the mouth of others. O how many have lost their vocation in this way! God grant that you may not also relax in your fervor!

What I have written must suffice for the present. I depend upon receiving an answer from you as soon as possible. Should you be at Naples or at Sieti, you will please inform me which is the surest way to write to you and to answer you, and in which place at Naples I may address an answer to you when you write to me. Yet I would rather have you come yourself. Let this be enough! Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa! I remain

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour,
Rector Major.

After an old copy.

LETTER 59.

To the Same.

He invites him to an interview. — Means that he should use not to lose his vocation.

Praised be the Most Holy Sacrament, and Mary Immaculate!

CIORANI, April 7, 1744.

Just this morning I received your esteemed favor, and I am happy to hear that up to the present time you have preserved the good sentiments with which you were inspired during the retreat. Had you spoken to me at that time, you would now perhaps have already left Egypt. It would be useless for me to say more; for in order to use the shortest way in this matter, we must have absolutely a personal interview.

We expect that by Saturday the passage of the Spaniards[1] will be over. I therefore expect you here without fail during the following week. Come on some pretext or other by way of Salerno.

I see that your resolution is as firm as ever; it is, therefore, evident to me that your vocation comes from God. For this reason if you do not now follow it, you will have to fear a great chastisement; for the Lord punishes severely those that despise these extraordinary graces, — graces that are too precious to be given to every one.

When therefore you receive this letter, you must again give yourself entirely to God, putting yourself wholly into his hands, and showing your readiness to do all that I may counsel you. Then you must come with the firm resolution of entirely submitting your will to mine, as well in regard to the substance of your vocation, as also in regard

[1] At this time there were many warlike movements of the Spanish troops in consequence of the death of Charles VI., as the Austrians were menacing the Neapolitan territory.

to the manner and the time of carrying it out. This determination is necessary for you in order to realize so important a resolution; otherwise you would furnish the devil with the means either to disquiet you for the future or to make you delay so long till you lose your vocation, as has happened to so many others. Come, therefore, as soon as possible; do not lose a moment. You will not be the first that has been admitted here as a secular without having yet received any of the Holy Orders, provided only the requisite conditions are at hand, together with the firm will of belonging entirely to God. A few days ago there were received among us several young persons who left their homes without saying anything to their parents of what they intended to do. We are by no means obliged to manifest to them such a vocation, because by such a communication we run the risk of losing our vocation, and without the special assistance of God our eternal salvation.

Tread, therefore, under-foot all tender affections for your parents, and become courageous. God calls you not to some earthly dignity, but he calls you to the great dignity of being a saint. You must know how to respond to this appeal, and you will soon see how the Lord, who is so generous and so faithful, will favor you with new graces, which he has already prepared for you. Courage, then! consider that for this God who is so worthy of being loved, and who has done so much for our souls, all that we can do, even the sacrifice of our lives, is indeed very little. Endeavor to take generously this step on which depend both your predestination and the plenitude of the favors that God has reserved for you in time and in eternity.

Here are a few things that I wish you to observe during the days that will elapse before you come: Do not cease to recommend this matter to God either before the Blessed Sacrament or before the crucifix in your room. Endeavor to avoid all conversation, and spend as much as possible all

your time in spiritual reading and in prayer. Receive as often as possible holy Communion, for you need special strength in order to remove the obstacles that hell will put in your way. God only can give you this strength. If it happens that your resolution should grow a little weak, have recourse at once to the Blessed Virgin, and say to her: O Mary Immaculate! do not abandon me; obtain for me the grace to remain faithful to God. — Then address the following words to God: O Lord! I no longer belong to myself; I have given myself entirely to Thee; give me the needed strength. — If you act thus you will always surely gain the victory.

I hope that you will with pleasure learn from this letter the desire that I have of seeing you a saint and belonging entirely to God; and on your part, you must pray to Jesus Christ to make me what I wish you to be. I close this letter by informing you that my companions as well as myself are impatiently waiting for you. I am, etc. — Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Recommend yourself to St. Stanislas Kostka that he may obtain for you the strength to correspond to your vocation as he did. Live Jesus and Mary!

In order that this letter may arrive without delay I shall send it to Sieti. If you have not time to answer it, it will not matter. I shall be satisfied if you only receive my letter, and if you come to us with the same sentiments that you have expressed in your letter. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your very devoted and very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
Rector Major.

After an old copy.

LETTER 60.

To Canon Giuseppe Sparano, at S. Restituta at Naples.

He sends him a sketch of the life of the Venerable Gennaro Maria Sarnelli to have it printed.

Praised be the Most Blessed Sacrament and Mary Immaculate!

CIORANI, July 17, 1744.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: Canon Sersale[1] has requested me to write the biography of Don Gennaro of happy memory, and mentioned to me that the Congregation[2] wished to have it printed together with the biography of Carace.[3] I have already written it, and have sent it to Canon Rosa, the Father Superior. Sersale told me that you would take care of the rest; I therefore beg you to make corrections in the manuscript as appears best to you, and especially to correct the mistakes that may be found therein; for I had one of our lay-brothers to copy it, and the time for the courier to start is at hand and I cannot revise it. What I ask of you particularly is to urge the gentlemen of the Congregation to have the work printed. This is properly our duty, but God knows how poor we are and if Don Gennaro has left us his books, it is at the price of many legal incumbrances and expenses to us. I know that your Reverence has great influence; I earnestly entreat you to do whatever you can. This publication will not only serve to increase the honor of the Congregation, but it will be of great profit to many readers. Your Reverence loved Sarnelli when he was living; you

1 Giuseppe Sersale, at that time Canon of the metropolitan church at Naples and later Archbishop of Sorrento, was a great friend of St. Alphonsus and of the Venerable Sarnelli.

2 The Congregation of the *apostolic missions* to which the Venerable Father Sarnelli belonged.

3 Tommaso Carace, a member of the same Congregation.

should love him more after his death, since he died a saint. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa! Wishing you to send me an answer and to recommend me to Jesus Christ, I remain with profound respect,

Your very grateful and very devoted servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After an old copy.

LETTER 61.

To the Same.

He sends him the manuscript of the little book entitled *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin*, and asks him to revise it.

Praised be the Most Holy Sacrament and Mary Immaculate!

CIORANI, August 10, 1744.

My dear Canon: I have requested Canon Torni to intrust the revision of this little book on the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin to none but yourself, being confident that you would soon attend to this matter. I therefore beg you to lay aside everything else so as to finish the task, because a pious layman has promised to pay for the printing and I fear that if there is a delay the money destined for this purpose will be spent; and then there will be no more question of having the book printed. I believe that the little book will be very useful for those that wish to make a visit to the Most Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin, and I must say that I have seen nothing like it, and this was the reason why I composed it.

I, moreover, intrusted it to your Reverence because it was badly copied, and I was so hurried that I could not have it again copied. You will have the patience to read it as it is. I shall say no more, and I hope that you will

render me this service promptly. As for the *visits* that are still wanting, I will send them afterwards, because I am anxious that the printing of the book should soon begin; because that pious layman is so much interested in the matter. As to yourself, you will have to receive your pay from Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and from the Blessed Virgin. I have written it in a very simple style. Your Reverence will please make the corrections that shall appear to you to be necessary, but do not trouble yourself about too much elegance.

I have sent you the biography of Sarnelli [Venerable Gennaro]. Recommend me to Jesus Christ; and tell the bearer of my letter on what day he may return to deliver the manuscript to be printed. Perhaps the royal approbation is not needed for this little book; but if it should be required, tell the printer to see that it be procured.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa! Believe me,
Your very devoted, very humble,
and very grateful servant,
ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After the original in possession of Father Francis Xavier Pecorelli, C. SS. R.

LETTER 62.

To a Minister of the King.

A petition asking for his protection in favor of the house at Nocera (Pagani).

[1744.]

Your Excellency: Alfonso de Liguori and Cesare Sportelli, who with other priests are united in mutual charity, humbly represent to your Excellency the following facts:

Monsignor de Dominicis, Bishop of Nocera, having represented to his Majesty (may God preserve him!) that

he had succeeded in introducing into his diocese the suppliants to labor for the salvation of souls, supplicated his Majesty to grant to the same priests the power of building a house and a public chapel, near Pagani at some distance from the city. His royal piety agreed to this project, and was moved to give his consent by issuing the subjoined copy of a royal decree. In the execution of the most revered orders of his Majesty those priests began in the past year, to build and have at present finished the said chapel and house, having in view the good of the diocese, and conforming themselves in everything to the instructions given. But evil-disposed persons are trying, we are told, to molest and to disturb them in their holy exercises, exhortations, sermons, and other spiritual works; they act against the orders given by his Majesty, as appears from the subjoined copy of the royal ordinance directed to the governor of Nocera.

The undersigned therefore, have recourse to your Excellency, and beg you to give orders that we may be no longer molested nor disquieted in regard to the beforementioned house. Their request is so well-founded that the neighboring hamlets, containing about twenty-five thousand souls, are anxious to receive spiritual help, as may be seen from the annexed testimony of all the municipalities of Nocera united.[1] And for this favor which you will grant them they will pray that God may reward you.

After the original, sketched partly by the hand of the saint and preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] They were seven in all.

LETTER 63.

To a Gentleman of Influence.

Another petition in favor of the same house at Nocera (Pagani).

[1744.]

In the year 1732, Alfonso de Liguori, a priest and Neapolitan patrician, and other secular priests began to live together in Community in the diocese of Scala by the authority of the bishop and under the direction of Monsignor Falcoia, Bishop of Castellammare (of happy memory). Their principal aim was by missions and by preaching in their own church to devote themselves to the spiritual good of the people in the country, who usually are the most needy and mostly deprived of spiritual help. In the year 1736 they proceeded to the diocese of Salerno where, in a place called Ciorani, by the authority of Monsignor Fabrizio di Capua, at that time archbishop of Salerno, they built a house and a church whence the above-mentioned priests constantly went forth to give missions, not only in the said diocese but in many other dioceses, and whither to make the spiritual exercises the Ordinary always sends his clergy and those that are to be ordained either at the time of an ordination, or at other times during the year. For this reason the present Bishop of Nocera called the said priests into his diocese, assigning to them a small house and church in a place called Pagani. Here with the royal consent as well as with that of the citizens, they built a little church and a residence for their own use. In this city and diocese they consecrate themselves to the service of souls by preaching, by hearing confessions, by giving missions and other spiritual exercises, as may be learned from the above-mentioned bishop. Now some sons of iniquity, moved by various pretexts, are trying to hinder the aforesaid

exercises, so necessary for the salvation of souls, and are striving by cunning and violence to drive away those priests from the above-mentioned place. This being against all reason and against natural and divine right, the petitioners have recourse to your eminent piety, zeal and protection, so that you may defend not only the cause of the said priests, but the honor of God and the salvation of souls.

After an original draft preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 64.

To Canon Casati,[1] at Iliceto.

He announces to him his approaching arrival.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NAPLES, November 28, 1744.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: Through Signor Andrea Calvini I have been informed of the very pious desire entertained by your Reverence. I am going to give a mission at Iliceto about the 11th or 12th of next month by request of the prince.[2] I therefore do not say more, because we shall speak of everything when we meet. In the mean time, I devote myself entirely to your service, and and beg you to recommend me to Jesus Christ! Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! I remain,

Your very devoted and very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After the original in possession of Sister Alfonsa Maria de Gesù, discalced Carmelite at Palermo.

1 Giacomo Casati was Canon of the collegiate church at Iliceto, in the diocese of Bovino.

2 The Prince of Castellaneta, D. Mattia Miroballo d' Aragona, had asked St. Alphonsus to give a mission at Iliceto.

LETTER 65.

To Father Xavier Rossi,[1] at Ciorani.

Details in regard to the new foundation at Iliceto.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

[SANTA MARIA DELLA CONSOLAZIONE] December 19, 1744.

Let us thank Jesus and Mary for having deigned to conclude the founding of the new house, Santa Maria della Consolazione, within a space of eight days. Canon Casati made out this morning the donation *inter vivos* [among the living] putting us also in possession of the property that he gives us. The Bishop [of Bovino, the Venerable Antonio Lucci], has already ceded the place to us; and the Chapter, which here represents the parish priest, has given its consent together with the municipality.

The revenues from the donations given us amount to about three hundred ducats, in return for which we must say two Masses daily. We have also a fine apartment, suitable for a library, and the faculty of employing the revenues of this donation to establish two patrimonies for the members of our Institute.

The property that we have received consists of more than seven hundred acres of arable land, of a vineyard, and of some houses together with a grove of olive trees.

Moreover, Canon Maffei has promised us a free benefice with an annual income of twenty-two ducats.

Thus the house of our Lady has an income of about

1 Father Xavier Rossi was born in the year 1706; he entered the Congregation a year after its foundation. He applied himself from the beginning to a perfect imitation of Jesus Christ, our Lord. He passed almost his whole life at Ciorani; confiding only in divine Providence, he began the building of the house into which he afterwards introduced the great work of the spiritual exercises. This great servant of God died in 1758 while looking fixedly at the images of Jesus and Mary.

thirty ducats, and if at least a part of the soil be worked under the superintendence of a Brother, it might yield six hundred ducats. This would moreover not be inconvenient, as the property lies close to the house.

We were received here by all, by the bishop, by priests and by laymen as angels from Paradise; they continually thank Jesus Christ for our arrival. Canon Maffei in particular is overjoyed. There is therefore every hope that the Prince [of Castellaneta] on his arrival will assure us an annual income. I do not speak of a well-founded hope of having a fine revenue of three hundred ducats a year furnished by the inhabitants of the Abbruzzi.

The people here are very affectionate and docile; there are few houses of middle rank; nearly all are country people; they are inclined to be pious; few sins are committed.

The country is fertile and produces everything: wood, wheat, grain, vegetables, good wines, excellent cheese, and an abundance of good fruit. Here are cows, sheep, and goats, and a kind of cheese, the like of which I have never before tasted. The air is very good and very mild. In our place there is water that might be called water from Paradise, together with a fountain of the Madonna; surrounding the latter is a little fish-pond, by which we can always water our garden and keep it clad in bright verdure.

[Here a part is missing.]

The founder has reserved to himself the usufruct of the property, but he has promised us fifty-six ducats a year on condition that we say a Mass daily. Then there are the benefice of Maffei and the profits accruing from the land of the Madonna. It is certain that you will have to live in the mean time on slender means. But God is ever near to assist us. Go on cheerfully. We shall always be beggars in this life.

Before the mission of Modugno, I shall go to Foggia to

speak to the President and to the Bishop[1] of Foggia to obtain permission to give a course of missions to the inhabitants of the Abbruzzi, for I have this very much at heart. I have been informed that the President expects us.

As for the missions at Mirabella, about which I wrote to you, I have learned that it will not be necessary to go there as the bishop is sending the Pious Workers who are at present giving a mission at Buellino. Don Andrea [Villani] and Don Cesare [Sportelli] can then devote themselves entirely to the missions that are given in this place.

Send thither Don Bernardo [Tortora], Don Ignazio[2] and Brother Romoaldo with two measures of chestnuts and one measure of walnuts. They may take the mules of Bracigliano.

I am thinking of taking up my residence then in the house of the Madonna, at least for some time, until affairs are in order. Don Andrea is to be for the present Rector and Master of novices at Ciorani, and your Reverence, Minister and Econome. Have a little patience while there, for in a short time you have to be at Iliceto. As soon as matters are settled at Nocera — if God wishes to have them settled — Don Cesare, in compliance with the letter which I have written to him, will go as Minister to Iliceto, and Don Giovanni [Mazzini] will remain at Pagani as Rector; Don Carmine [Fiocchi] and Don Paolino [Scibelli] will also proceed thither. Don Lorenzo [d' Antonio] with Don Paolo [Cafaro] will go to Ciorani. It will be necessary for Don Paolo to remain here for some months; for he has won a great name here.

All with the exception of Don Lorenzo and Don Paolo will begin on the 1st of January to apply the intentions

1 The Bishop of Foggia, to whose diocese the town of Foggia then belonged and where he resided several months of the year, was at that time Mgr. Giovanni Pietro Faccolli.

2 Don Ignazio was a secular priest who accompanied the Fathers on missions.

of the Masses for this house. This new foundation is beginning under the beautiful standard of holy poverty. All of us have already said a Mass for the house.

Let the secretary at Nocera preserve this letter. Tell Don Gaetano di Caro,[1] that if he will be so kind as to assist us this Lent during the missions to be given to the people of the Abbruzzi, he will do us a very great favor.

Don Cesare writes me that Don Paolo will send him as soon as you ask for him.

May Jesus Christ bless us all! Pray for me constantly. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Send the plans also to Nocera. Live Jesus!

According to what the courier says, the Fathers can set out Saturday morning and arrive there Sunday evening.

Please send at once to the hamlets the enclosed letter of Signor Calvini.

Your humble servant and brother,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After the original, part of which is in the possession of Don Giuseppe de Aquila, apostolic *abbreviatore*, and the remainder is to be found in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 66.

To Father Cesare Sportelli, Rector of the House at Pagani.

Project of abandoning the foundation at Pagani. — Service asked for Iliceto.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

ILICETO, December 28, 1744.

I have received your very kind favor as well as the expression of your devoted attachment. At the beginning

[1] This secular priest accompanied the Fathers on the missions. He is the same of whom mention is afterwards made.

you write to me about making peace, etc., and the obstinacy of Don Francesco;[1] but you say nothing of the last letter that I sent you in which I wrote you about giving up Pagani. We could, I said to you, abandon this house on the two following conditions: that Don Francesco becomes responsible for all the debts, and that before renouncing the donation the permission of the king and of the bishop of the city should be asked; in this way we should always be able to excuse ourselves if we do not relinquish our right. On the other hand, this negotiation appears to me to be necessary in order that we may free ourselves from the many disquietudes and come to a definite conclusion; for if things do not become quiet in some way, I should hardly think that God wishes any longer this foundation, which has become so troublesome and inconvenient to the Congregation. It is true, God has made us see wonderful things; but has perhaps had designs other than ours. I also write you that if in this matter you should meet with any difficulties you should propose them to me, and that we were not pressed to hurry the matter. Again, I beg you to write to me about your difficulties if you have any, or to carry out wholly or in part what I have expressed in my letter, since the same thought never leaves me.

I have, moreover, written to you that if the foundation is to be abandoned, it will be necessary that you should continue to assist me at least until affairs have become more quiet.

Here things continue to prosper; but as to the missions among the people of the Abbruzzi, the devil has begun to make efforts to hinder them. There are so far ninety thousand abandoned souls, but O God, how abandoned are they! If I had been able without detriment to the missions to free

1 D. Francesco Cantaldi, the founder of the house at Pagani, was afterwards as active in destroying the foundation as he had been before in securing it.

myself from the missions at Modugno,[1] I would have arranged for the harvesting of this great crop, that is, the missions among the inhabitants of the Abbruzzi. But it did not seem to me to be proper to omit that mission at present after having made an arrangement in regard to it with the Archbishop [of Bari], the archpriest and the clergy. But on the other hand, by going to Modugno I cannot for a greater reason neglect the missions begun in the Abbruzzi, and therefore I have sent for Father Andrea [Villani] and Gaetano [di Caro] or Father Paolino [Scibelli] if Don Gaetano cannot come; because afterwards Father Andrea and another, with Father Lorenzo [d' Antonio], I think, will return here after we come back from Modugno.

I have not resolved to remain permanently in this house. When God wills, I shall return to Ciorani. But it appears to me to be necessary that I should not depart from this place for a considerable time, because there are very many weighty things to be adjusted.

I continue to write by another hand, because I am sick in bed with bronchial catarrh and fever. Here the good that can be done under the present circumstances is immense; more so than at Nocera and Ciorani. I omit writing to you everything. But when you come here, God willing, you will obtain every information. There is question of an extreme necessity.

I had hoped that the Prince of Castellaneta would come here to arrange about the annual support of this house; but our Lord has not wished that he should come. Hence it became necessary for me to write to him the enclosed letter telling him how things stood. Your Reverence may read it and then seal it. But it will also be necessary for you to go to Naples to speak to him and to give him my letter, because more can always be done by word of mouth, and

[1] Modugno, situated in the diocese of Bari, had afterwards a mission in the month of February, 1745.

the prince will always have less courage to refuse when he is face to face with you than when he writes you a letter. There is no remedy: *we must strike the iron when it is hot;* because if we allow the matter to grow cold it may perhaps become afterwards a difficult thing to obtain anything from the prince. But now it would be well to procure from the prince a hundred and fifty or a hundred scudi annually, to be derived from the income of the estate. Hence your Reverence should try to speak a few words with the prince; you will know how to do so. It will be necessary that on account of this matter you should lay aside everything else, because if a mistake is made now, nothing more can be done. Your Reverence, therefore, will please promptly finish the little mission, which is perhaps now on your hands, and go at once to Naples to speak to Castellaneta; because I am in hopes that after you have spoken to him he will I think write at once to Iliceto. Here the agent and Canon Maffei will give relief to our little vessel, and some good may be accomplished before the prince sets out with his regiment; this may easily happen in the midst of the political turmoil that now exists.

Depart then, dear Father; perpetual works should have the preference before those that are temporal. May your Reverence have patience, and may you take upon yourself this inconvenience for the love of the Most Blessed Virgin.

I embrace all in Jesus Christ. I have written to Ciorani that they should send to you the letters that I have written to this house. Read them and have them read.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Don Bernardo [Tortora] and Don Ignazio arrived here on Monday afternoon about three o'clock, covered with snow from head to foot.

Your servant and brother,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

[*P. S.*] I inform your Reverence that after receiving this letter you should wait another week and then go to Castellaneta; because within this time I am anxious that he should receive a letter of mine which I sent him beforehand through Oliviero.[1] Castellaneta's address is: Quarter of *anime del Purgatorio*, at the palace of the Duchess of Pesche.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 67.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce.

He exhorts her to give to prayer all the time that she can snatch from her occupations.

Praised be the Most Blessed Sacrament, and Mary Immaculate!

ILICETO, S. MARIA DELLA CONSOLAZIONE, April 14, [1745].

My dear daughter: I am at present at Iliceto, in a new house that we have just established, and that is two days' journey from Ciorani. I have received here no other letter than the one that was probably the last that you addressed to me.

I know not the answer that Mgr. di Caiazzo has given to you; but I can well imagine it; I beg you therefore to be undisturbed.

That ray that has enlightened you in your jubilee confession I truly regard as a ray of light sent by God himself in order to give you a little strength to endure storms.

Since you have to give yourself up to the occupations of your employment, do so, and snatch all the time that you can for prayer, which is an occupation that will always

[1] D. Giovanni Oliviero was a penitent of the saint and lived at Naples.

be profitable to you. Recommend me without ceasing to Jesus and to Mary. Live Jesus and Mary. I remain,

Your very affectionate Father,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

[*P. S.*] To conclude quieting you, you might answer Mgr. di Caiazzo that the five thousand ducats are destined for the good work; then think no more about it.

As to the widow, I have recommended her to Jesus. Tell her that Jesus wishes to have her entirely for himself; this is the reasou why he has taken her son from her. Let her never omit to offer up to God this sacrifice, and give herself entirely to Jesus. Live Jesus and Mary!

As for the letters, send them to Ciorani. Live Jesus and Mary!

After an old copy.

LETTER 68.

To the Sovereign Pontiff Benedict XIV.

Petition to obtain the confirmation of the establishment of missionaries at Iliceto.

[May 3, 1745.]

Most Holy Father: Alfonso de Liguori, united with many other priests in the bond of mutual and fraternal charity, and prostrate at the feet of your Holiness expresses the following facts:

The undersigned having, in 1744, proceeded to the village of Puglia, that is to a place called Iliceto, in the diocese of Bovino, to give a mission there, the people and the venerable Chapter of this place requested him to labor among them in behalf of the many abandoned souls. To accomplish this they wished him and his companions to take up their abode in the convent of Santa Maria della Consolazione, situated upon a mountain, and at one time

inhabited by Count D. Giovanni Appiani. He most willingly accepted the offer, since thereby there was opened to him a more convenient road to extend his labors through the Puglia, and to give assistance with the divine word and the administration of the sacraments to so many poor abandoned people, and among them to fifty or sixty thousand shepherds, who were absolutely deprived of all spiritual help. The acceptance of this foundation, moreover, makes it convenient for him to go about in the neighboring dioceses, as he has done and is doing at present in so many other dioceses, where the missions produce the most salutary fruits for the reform of morals, to the greatest satisfaction of the inhabitants.

This state of things being known to our most zealous Bishop of Bovino, Mgr. Lucci, he deigned by an ordinance issued in the said year 1744, to grant to the petitioner the permission to reside in said place to the great delight as well as with the express consent of all the people and of the venerable Chapter of Iliceto. And since now the petitioner desires from your Holiness, who is so great a lover and promoter of this work which gives so much glory to Jesus Christ, a confirmation of said place of Santa Maria della Consolazione, he therefore most humbly supplicates your Holiness for this favor, being satisfied that your Holiness will be rewarded by Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin, for the love of whom he asks it, and promising to pray and have the people to pray always more and more for the exaltation of the Church and for the welfare of the government of your Holiness.

After an old copy.

LETTER 69.

To Father Giovanni Mazzini, the new Rector at Pagani.[1]

He begs him to put in force regular observance.

Live Jesus and Mary!

S. Maria [della Consolazione], September 23, [1745].

I beg your Reverence, who are now in charge of this house, to introduce into it the faithful observance of the Rule. This regular observance has been hitherto very difficult on account of the condition of the place in which you live and on account of the law-suits that had to be carried on. Now, however, everything should be set in order, for otherwise the non-observance of the Rule will grow into a custom, and then it will be very difficult to bring the subjects back to a sense of their duty. I therefore charge your conscience with the care of this matter, since being at a distance I can not see nor know everything that is going on. Before God the Congregation will prosper so long as the Rule is observed and the subjects are solicitous about their own sanctification; for when inobservance is once introduced, all will end in smoke. We have now,

1 Father Mazzini was born at Naples, December 18, 1704. Having spent his youth in wonderful innocence, he afterwards devoted himself to the ecclesiastical state. Since the year 1723 he had beeu one of the most intimate friends of our saint. The Congregation having been established, it was not permitted him by his confessor to enter the Institute at once as he had wished to do; but after three years spent in earnest entreaties, he obtained the so much desired permission. An entire volume would not suffice to contain a narration of the virtues practised by this fervent servant of God. It suffices to say that he was worthy of being in every respect one of the dearest friends of St. Alphonsus. He survived the saint a few years, and so had the good fortune of giving his testimony in the process of Beatification. He died in the peace of the Lord, December 3, 1792.

thanks be to God! three houses and a sufficient number of subjects to attend to the work of the Institute. All that we have to do now is to do the will of God, and to labor earnestly at our own perfection; for then the Congregation will prosper, the number of subjects will increase, and much will be accomplished for the glory of God. If we do not effect this, God will abandon us and everything will go to ruin. Communicate, I beg you, these lines to all the Fathers. I embrace them all, conjuring them to recommend me to Jesus and Mary. Live Jesus and Mary!

At the evening prayers recommend to the Blessed Virgin the missions that we are to give during this year, especially at Foggia and in the diocese of Troia. I remain, etc. — Live Jesus and Mary! I salute D. Biase [Biagio Amarante], etc.; send me the names, etc. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your brother in Jesus,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 70.

To Cardinal Giuseppe Spinelli, Archbishop of Naples.

Petition to obtain the faculties needed for the missions.[1]

[December, 1745.]

Most Eminent and Most Reverend Sir: Alfonso de Liguori, Superior of the missionaries of the Congregation of the

[1] Pope Benedict XIV. wishing to promote in the kingdom of Naples the good custom of frequenting the sacraments had since September 8, 1744, delegated Cardinal Spinelli for this work.

Most Holy Saviour, established at Iliceto, suppliantly declares to your Eminence that, being actually engaged in giving the exercises of a mission in the diocese of Troia, and having thence to go to the diocese of Cirignola, for the greater promotion of the glory of God and the sanctification of souls, he desires to be provided with the faculties and the indulgences that for this purpose have been granted to your Eminence by his Holiness, submitting himself always to the will of your Eminence; and if you deign to grant the favor that he asks, he will pray to God to reward you.

To this petition the Cardinal gave the following answer:

The better to secure the fruits of the holy missions and thus to promote the salvation of souls, we welcome your petition and we grant you, the Superior of the Congregation of the Most Holy Saviour, established at Iliceto, the powers that our most holy Pope Benedict XIV. has granted and communicated to us, by delegation to us especially as the supreme Director of the missions in the kingdom of Naples. But we desire you to use these powers only for the missions mentioned in the petition, in the exercises of the holy ministry, in the confessional, and by yourself and during the time of the missions only.

Wishing also to favor the piety and increase the devotion of the people, we grant the indulgences of which His Holiness the Pope has made us the dispenser, and willingly concede the seven years and seven times forty days to the faithful of both sexes who attend the missions in any city or place in the kingdom of Naples, or who not being able to attend them, on account of some lawful impediment, pray to God piously for the success of these exercises.

Moreover, to all the faithful who, truly penitent, having confessed and communicated, attend on the last day of the mission, or who lawfully hindered to do so, pray to God, as we have said, after having received the sacraments of penance and Eucharist, we grant a plenary indulgence and the remission of all their sins, available however only for the missions indicated in the petition.

Given at Naples, in our archiepiscopal palace, the 11th of the month of December, 1745.

JOSEPH Cardinal, Archbishop.

JOSEPH ROMANO, Canon secretary.[1]

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] Quo utilius percipiatur fructus sanctarum missionum ac proinde animarum saluti proficiatur, supplicantis petitionibus inhærentes, facultates, quæ nobis a SSmo Domino nostro Benedicto P. P. XIV, tamquam supremo Directori in Regni Neapolitani missionibus specialiter delegato, concessæ et communicatæ fuerunt, tibi Superiori Congregationis SSmi Salvatoris, in Iliceto institutæ, concedimus et elargimur. Volumus tamen, ut supradictis facultatibus, pro missionibus in supplici libello expressis tantum, et in actu sacramentalis confessionis per teipsum, et durante missionis tempore dumtaxat, ut valeas, et non aliter.

Similiter Christifidelium pietatem confovere et devotionem augere cupientes, Indulgentiarum, quarum dispensatores idem SSmo Dominus esse Nos voluit, omnibus et singulis utriusque sexus, qui ubique civitatum et locorum Regni Neapolitani missionibus interfuerint; vel, legitimo impedimento detenti interesse non valentes, pias tamen preces pro spirituali earumdem missionum fructu ad Deum fuderint, septem annos cum totidem quarantenis libenter impertimur. Insuper omnibus Christifidelibus, qui vere pœnitentes et confessi ac SSmo Eucharistiæ sacramento refecti, ultima die missioni interfuerint, vel qui legitime præpediti præsentes esse non valentes, expleta tamen sacramentali confessione et communione, easdem, ut supra, preces ad Deum fuderint, plenariam omnium peccatorum suorum Indulgentiam et remissionem, per dictas tantum in supplici libello enunciatas missiones valituram, misericorditer in Domino concedimus et elargimur.

Datum NEAPOLI, ex nostro Palatio achiepiscopali, die undecima mensis decembris 1745.

JOSEPHUS Cardinalis, Archiepiscopus.

JOSEPH ROMANO, Canonicus secret.

LETTER 71.

To the Mother Abbess and the Nuns of the Monastery of the Annunciation at Foggia.

Explanations relative to the use of figured music[1] and to the expenses contrary to poverty.

[Beginning of the year 1746.]

Live Jesus and Mary!

Very Reverend Mother Abbess and dear Sisters: Having had the honor, without any merit on our part, to give the spiritual exercises[2] to your pious Community, we have heard that some of our assertions have been misunderstood and wrongly interpreted. For the honor of truth and to satisfy our conscience we have thought it proper to indicate here what we have said about figured music and about the special expenses incurred by the officials.

As for *figured music*, we say that it is by no means suitable for pious persons, and much less for virgins consecrated to God, as appears from the Rules of all saintly religious Orders; and if such a practice exists in any monastery, it is usually condemned as an abuse. If, then, we consider the circumstances that accompany it, we see that it is morally impossible to practise this kind of music without sin on account of the solicitude, the vanity, the

[1] A mixture of music and plain-chant very much in use in the second half of the eighteenth century. The inconveniences that resulted from this altogether wordly chant had for a long time made the Church forbid it to the monasteries; but an extraordinary infatuation always introduced it again. "There is nothing more ridiculous and more flat," says Jean-Jacque Rousseau with reason, "than these plain-chants that are adapted to modern music. We are under great obligations to the bishops, provosts, and singers who oppose this barbarous mixture." — Quoted by D. Guéranger, *Institutions liturgiques*, book, ii. chap. xx.

[2] This retreat was preached in the month of December 1745, on the occasion of the celebrated mission given at Foggia.

distractions, the expense, the infractions of the Rule, and other disorders that inevitably result from it both inside and outside of the monastery. The fault is more or less grave according to the disorders that arise therefrom. According to what has been generally reported in Foggia and outside of it, the disorders that have occurred are not inconsiderable.

As for the *expenses* incurred by the officials,[1] we have said that the letter of the Sacred Congregation of January 26, 1742, written by order of His Holiness to the Ordinaries, contains and expresses a formal prohibition for all religious in office to expend the least amount of money or to make the least present on feast days or in the discharge of their duties, whether in the monastery or out of it. The words of the letter are as follows: "His Holiness commands that this be inviolably observed by every monastery, even though it be exempt, etc., under pain, in case of infringement, of deprivation of office and of the power of voting and being voted for, to be incurred as soon as the deed is committed." Consequently His Holiness enjoins upon all the bishops "to impose, by a formal precept of obedience, upon all the officials, the observance of this ordinance, to assure themselves of its exact observance, and to report to him what has been done."

Also, on April 27, 1742, the bishop acting as the apostolic delegate for executing the holy and paternal ordinances of His Holiness according to the terms of his letter, prescribed the observance of them by a formal precept of obedience, with this explanation, that the above-mentioned penalties, if ever incurred, would last not according to his

[1] Common life had relaxed in the eighteenth century in many convents of Italy. Certain religious were then by reason of their charge obliged to incur expenses on feasts and pious solemnities, and in order to do this they encroached upon their revenues. As vanity was frequently their motive, these expenses became at times very considerable.

pleasure, since he is only the executor, but at the pleasure of the Sacred Congregation, as the Sovereign Pontiff expressly ordains.

After decisions so precise, we have said that the officials are obliged to conform to the orders of His Holiness under the penalty of a grievous sin. As it was objected that the Community could not make all the necessary outlay, and that there was not sufficient revenues to supply it, as has been prescribed by His Holiness, in the conference which we gave on the subject, we answered as follows: "In view of these circumstances it is necessary to report to the Sacred Congregation, and in the mean time, supposing that the before-mentioned expenses could suffer no delay on account of the current wants of the monastery, we putting a mild interpretation on the ordinance of His Holiness (for as there is here question of an interpretation, it should be made in a very strict sense), we may strictly permit the officials to make the necessary outlay, but not a superfluous one, as had been too often made in the past." To all this one could allege nothing else than the established usage. We replied that as to the past, good faith could furnish an excuse, yet for the present, since the matter has been made clearer, this practice can no longer be tolerated without sin, nor even without a grievous sin.

This we have uniformly said; besides, we do not presume to enforce our opinions, nor to set ourselves up as teachers. We have only spoken in order to relieve our conscience by rendering the obedience that is due to the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 72.

To his Brother D. Ercole de Liguori.

He complains to him about his conduct, which was anything but brotherly, in regard to certain temporal interests.

[February, 1746.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I have read your last letter in which you say in substance that when I am in distress you will help me.

My dear Brother, this is not the way to arrange the matter, but it is to force on a litigation; and I tell you again that I do not wish to litigate, and I could do so because I am claiming what belongs to me. Rest assured that I should hardly appear in court when it would assign to me the one hundred and fifty ducats with the rest of the money.

If at least you had said to me: *I wish, dear Brother, that you would give up your right to such a sum.* But to seek to bring forward reasons, and to say that the hundred and fifty ducats do not concern me, is very bad treatment on your part.

The two hundred ducats were given me by a legacy; what have they then to do with the portion that my father [1] has also bequeathed to me in the last disposition of his property? Besides, the two hundred ducats he did not leave to me, but to the Congregation, namely, one hundred for the building at Ciorani, and a hundred which I might dispose of; and then as to the two hundred ducats, according to

1 Giuseppe de Liguori, father of St. Alphonsus, had died some weeks previously. He had secured to his son Alphonsus, an annual income of one hundred and fifty ducats payable to our saint after his death; moreover, he bequeathed to him at his death (December 1745) two hundred ducats as a special gift. Don Ercole, it seems, pretended that this last gift nearly annulled the former. — We here mention that the ducat is about equal to an American dollar, or to 4 francs, 25 centimes.

you my father meant that I should renounce my life-interest of one hundred and fifty ducats and be content with forty-two ducats! What have the two hundred ducats to do with all this? They arise from a legacy, and the one hundred and fifty were assured me by an anterior notarial act. Add to this that in making the bequest my late father did not mention anything about the rest.

You, moreover, tell me that I have not declared that I wished to have the one hundred and fifty ducats. — What obligation is there for me to make a declaration when I am in possession of the notarial act? I have always firmly believed that at the death of my father the one hundred and fifty ducats were due to me, and I firmly believed that you would give them to me. And this payment I always held to be assured, nor did I ever think that you could refuse it to me. Now that I am reading your letters I do nothing but make signs of the cross, and I offer to God what you write to me and the way in which you treat me.

You come out so boldly because you have to deal with me. If you had to deal with D. Gennaro Sarnelli who went to law with his own father and made him give up to him his portion, or with the sisters Marianna and Maria Louisa who in regard to our father had recourse to judiciary measures, you would not have spoken thus.

But I have waited and have borne with this up to the present time in order not to cause you any displeasure. You will however in the end force me to do what is so disagreeable to me.

You write to me that when I am in need and *really in want of money and in great distress*, you will not neglect me. My dear D. Ercole, is this the way that you should treat me? In what manner, then, should I persuade you that I am in such necessity, that I am, as you say, in great distress? How in future am I to prove to you whether or not my difficulties are serious? You have already dis-

believed me, since you have not believed what I have written to you. How can I think that you will believe me hereafter? This is the treatment inflicted not by a brother, but by a barbarian, by an enemy. You really wish to make game of me. Your letter has so disturbed me that I have not been able to sleep. Alas! that then only I should have what belongs to me when I am in want and in great straits, so that for the future we should always have to quarrel with each other!

Now, my dear Brother, if you do not really desire to litigate, and if you do not wish to treat me as a bastard, tell me, finally, what you will assign to me every year so that I may be able to make up my accounts. I beg you for the love of the Blessed Virgin Mary not to ill-treat me any more. See how I treat you with brotherly charity and how patient I am. After that, do not complain of me if I claim all that belongs to me, that is, more than one hundred and fifty ducats; there are fifteen hundred Neapolitan ducats invested in our house and it is from my property that they have been drawn. I could make you weep, but I will not do so, since I love you.

I thought in order to satisfy you to give up to you thirty ducats a year, and finally even forty-two of the one hundred and fifty. Does this perhaps appear to you unacceptable? I repeat, as long as I can, I wish to proceed only with you in all charity. But I see that you wish only to abuse my goodness. God and the world will however justify me.

Behold now the fraternal charity of which you speak to me. Your love, to tell the truth, consists merely in prattling and in making no account of me.

Now more than ever you make me know that there is no other than God who truly loves us.

And so, my dear Brother, I again beg you for the love of the Blessed Virgin not to write to me any more in this manner; but tell me what do you wish to assign to me

every year till the death of Donna Francesca and Don Domenico, as you say? For pity's sake, do not ill-treat me any more. If you have not the two hundred ducats, it will hardly do to borrow them at interest; arrange now for me the annual assignment; this is important for both of us in order to live quietly. . . . Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! . . .

I send the bill and the receipt. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your very affectionate brother,

ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After the original in possession of Mgr. Francesco Giordani, auxiliary bishop of Cardinal Monaco La Valetta, in Albano.

LETTER 73.

To the Same.

He exhorts him to make the spiritual exercises.

ILICETO, February 22, 1746.

. . . . . Now answer me at once, and I beg you to restore peace to my mind for the love of the Blessed Virgin. All is right, and do not omit to make this week the exercises[1] in honor of the Blessed Virgin, and approach the sacraments. I make you that concession;[2] but I wish you to be under an obligation to serve the Congregation when your personal services are needed for any business at Naples. The persecution against us has already begun here. It will be difficult for me to go again to Naples, and God knows whether we shall again see each other. . . . .

After an incomplete old copy.

1 Given by the Fathers of the Mission or Lazarists.

2 This is treated of in the preceding letter.

LETTER 74.

Holograph Testament of the Saint.

[March 5, 1746.]

Live Jesus, Joseph, Mary, and Teresa!

I the undersigned, Alfonso de Liguori, declare this to be my last will after my death. Although this my will may not be invested with all the required conditions of a testament, yet it has the best possible validity for dispositions *ad pias causas* [for charitable purposes] without detracting from the *Falcidian* or *Trebbellian* law.[1]

I leave the holy Mother of God and my own Mother, and through her the Congregation of the Most Holy Saviour, as my universal heiress of all the goods that belong to me, and especially of the arrearage of the annuity of one hundred and fifty ducats a year, which is due to me from my family since the month of December 1745 after the death of my father. And although I was satisfied that my brother D. Ercole, in his present straitened circumstances and until his affairs improve, should pay me only seventy-two ducats a year, yet I desire that after my death all the arrears together with the balance of the one hundred and fifty, that is seventy-eight ducats, should all revert and be paid over to the Congregation. And furthermore, I bequeathe for the benefit of the same Congregation the capital of three or four hundred ducats, or as much as it is, which I reserved to myself in the renunciation[2] that I formerly made, as appears from the writing drawn up by the hand of a notary about the year 1725 . . . . at Naples. I no longer remember the name of the notary; but my brother may remember it.

[1] The *Falcidian* law guaranteed to the heir one fourth of the amount of the legacy which he was charged to pay. — The *Trebbellian* law guaranteed to the heir the fourth of the amount of the universal trusts which he was restoring.

[2] The saint here refers to the renunciation of his primogeniture.

And all this is to be at the disposition of the subsequent Rector Major.

At the house of S. Maria della Consolazione, March 5, 1746.

I Alfonso de Liguori dispose, as above.

Carlo Ricciardi, witness.

Giuseppe Bonasissa, witness.

Moreover, I leave to the same Congregation the portion left me by my father in his last will, made in regard to the property which he owned before his death.

After the original, the property of his Eminence Cardinal Guglielmo Sanfelice, Archbishop of Naples.

LETTER 75.

To Don Francesco Antonio Ricciardi, Advocate at Foggia.

Nature and advantages of renewals of missions.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

S. Maria della Consolazione, March 30, [1746].

My dear Don Francesco Antonio: Don Paolo [Cafaro] forgot to arrange with Mgr. di Troia in regard to the time when he desired that we should go to Foggia and to Troia for the Renewal. This exercise which we are accustomed to give in the places where we have given a mission produces the most salutary fruits.

I therefore send word to you expressly to do me the charity to go personally to Monsignor and to ask him whether it is pleasing to him that I should go with one or two other companions, to Foggia for three or four days and to Troia for two or three.

As for a dwelling and beds, tell him that he need not concern himself about them, since owing to your kindness we shall remain at your house at Foggia; and at Troia we shall stay at the house of the vicar Don Camillo. Let him understand that this will be only for a few days, and he

should have no fears. This will suffice; but it will be necessary for you to go to see him personally, as he will not say no to you.

You must, however, tell him that this Renewal, or this visit to Foggia, should be given soon, before the month of May and before the hot weather. I have thought of going there on the Sunday after Easter with one or two others, because the other companions will have to go to Orsara to give a mission there, as has been arranged by the bishop. Let me know whether or not the bishop is satisfied as to the time at which we are to go. If he, however, does not wish me to go any more to Foggia, I shall be pleased; for what an amount of inconvenience would not such a journey to Foggia cost me!

Inform me whether he wishes us to go at least to Troia.

See whether he will not say, *What use of having so many missions one after the other?* Answer him that this is not a mission. It only serves to remind the people of the mission, of the sermons that were preached, and of their promises. By means of this Renewal of the spirit many are confirmed in leading a good life. Many times the Renewal does more good than the mission that was given. Thus you may answer him that it is not a mission, but only a reminder, a remembrance of a mission; hence two Fathers for a few days will be sufficient.

I speak on behalf of God's glory, for in regard to my feelings I should rather have the bishop to say no.

You would oblige me if you would write to some friend at Manfredonia to find out whether any mill-stones could be had there, because we have need of some. Please send your answer to me at this place. Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary! I remain,

Your very humble and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

[*P. S.*] I have thought better of the matter: Please do not arrange the time of our arrival at Foggia for the Sunday after Easter, but for the Sunday following, that is, two weeks after Easter; because on the Sunday after Easter I cannot be absent. Live Jesus and Mary![1]

After the original in possession of the priest Alfonso Carinci.

LETTER 76.

To Father Andrea Villani.[2]

Gravity of the decision of a General Chapter. — Precautions that should necessarily be taken.

[ILICETO, October 1746.]

Live Jesus and Mary!

My dear Don Andrea: I have a little complaint to make about your Reverence. I hear that you have brought to the consideration of others the question in regard to the novitiate of the Brothers.[3] Your Reverence, it seems to me could have spoken to me about the matter in all confidence, and knowing the affection that I bear you and the

[1] Father Tannoia says in his "Life of St. Alphonsus" (B. ii. chap. xxvi.) that the Renewal took place and that the nine days of this exercise resembled a new mission.

[2] Father Villani, born February 8, 1706, in the town of Curtoli in the district of Sanseverino, was, in the year 1737, admitted into the Institute of St. Alphonsus of which after the holy founder he became the principal corner-stone. As he was a man of great learning, of tried virtue, and of singular prudence, many important offices were intrusted to him. He was successively Master of novices, several times Rector, then Consultor-General, Vicar-General, and before the death of St. Alphonsus, Superior-General of the houses in the kingdom of Naples. He died in 1792, greatly lamented by all.

[3] A Chapter was held in the house at Ciorani, October 12, 1746; but as the holy founder could not be present on account of ill health, he had the various decisions of the Chapter forwarded to him. The Fathers who had assembled decided upon some measures which, far from obtaining the approbation of the saint, were the cause why the Chapter was deferred till the year following.

liberty that I wish to see prevail in your relations to me, you could have, I say, told me secretly your idea on this point without undertaking to have the Chapter decide that the Rector Major cannot grant a dispensation when there is question of the novitiate. This is equivalent to overthrowing absolutely the powers of the Rector Major and to destroying the principal rule traced out by our Father [Mgr. Falcoia], which wishes a *government by a single head* like the *government* of the Church.

I for my part have desired, and I do now desire, at least under present circumstances, to keep aloof, occupied in looking on others acting and serving the Congregation. As for the government, I have accepted it through obedience, and it is only obedience that makes me retain it, for with the direction of the Institute and the thousand cares continually accompanying it, I can attend but little to the care of my soul.

But if I see that harmony is going to be destroyed, I would by all means resign, promising however to serve the Congregation with the same affection with which I have served it heretofore. If in fact one wishes to destroy what is even the very foundation of the Institute and make a rule against a rule, it would be better in order to avoid so supreme a confusion that I should resign and that a Rector [Major] according to your own ideas should preside over you.

I wish you not to mention this affair, which I have written specially for you. Only Don Saverio [Rossi] may read my letter, since to save time I do not desire to write again to him these same things.

And I secretly request you to bring about as prudently as possible the speedy dissolution of the Chapter; it should be put off to a later date. The devil had indeed based great hopes on this Chapter, and it has been a special grace given to us by God that no decree has as yet been made; for

if the points just mentioned had been decided, I assure you, and I can assure you, that the greatest confusion would arise. But God has prevented this evil, in the first place, because I cannot go to Ciorani with my bronchial catarrh, and because affairs so grave require necessarily my presence. Hence if ever the Chapter is to be held, it would have to be held here; now to make you all come to Iliceto at this time would produce disturbance in many things, as, for instance, in the missions, in the houses, etc. In the second place some one must go to Naples,[1] and lastly the order of the missions must be regulated.

Besides, there is question of affairs of vast importance, involving the establishment of new rules which are to last *in perpetuum* [forever]. All this will require many discussions and many explanations; and now in view of all this, so far separated as we are from one another, I myself being obliged to remain here, how could we desire to come to any determination in such a confused state of things, and when the *voters* are not even assembled?[2] I therefore do not intend to give my consent for the holding of this Chapter so unlawful and so irregular. I thought that only those things would be proposed about which letters had been sent to me, which indeed were matters of little importance. But there are matters in regard to which we must discuss and confer with one another. Moreover, I believed that the votes given by the living voice could all be sent hither *in writing;* but this was found to be impossible, as it is against the Rule, and I am opposed to it.

Hence I declare that for all these just reasons the

1 Father Sportelli had to repair to Naples to complete the foundation of the house of *Mater Domini* at Caposele.

2 Some of the Fathers who were voters failed to be present at the Chapter, October 12, and it was decided that notwithstanding their absence the Chapter should be continued if they would not have arrived on the 25th of the same month.

Chapter should be dissolved, and should afterwards be assembled in due time with all the necessary and essential formalities; otherwise it would be null and void and would only serve the purpose of causing disturbance. Do not doubt that I will take care that the Chapter be held without fail, but I and all the voters must take part in it.[1]

Your brother,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After an autograph sketch preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 77.

To Father Cesare Sportelli.

Prudence to be used in the proceedings of the General Chapter.

Live Jesus and Mary!

ILICETO, [October, 1746.]

My dear Don Cesare: Whatever I write to you I beg you to keep secret for the present, according as it may seem to be expedient.[2]

These gentlemen submitted to your consideration those points that concern the Rector Major, instead of proposing them in Chapter for the purpose of making decisions about things already decided and established.

It seems that they are taking away from the Rector Major the faculty of dispensation; but such a thing is contrary to all rules, because it belongs essentially to human laws to be subject to dispensation. And will it not

[1] In fact, the Chapter was held in the month of October of the following year.

[2] Father Sportelli, President of the Chapter was entirely of the same opinion as the saint was, to whom in writing he had mentioned, October 10, 1746, his fears and cautions.

be sometimes necessary to give a dispensation, and especially in regard to the novitiate of the Brothers and the students? . . .

This point gives me more concern than anything else, because it involves a matter of conscience . . . but so I have regarded it before God.

Moreover, with God's help and in time I hope, and perhaps shortly, I shall put the Rule in force as I have intended to do; and since this point especially creates objections, I will hereafter endeavor to be more reserved.

As to the questions proposed, some refer to things of no importance; it will be sufficient if we speak about them, there being no necessity to have capitular decisions given upon them; for a multiplicity of decrees would in its time be the ruin of the Congregation. Others have reference to points already determined by the Rule; if they are found not to be clear enough, it would be better to comment on them than to submit them to the deliberation of the Chapter.

To come back to what I have already written to you: what is necessary for the present is, that you set out for Naples in regard to the affair of Caposele. As I have explained to you, it will suffer no delay, and we shall have the remorse of having failed in this foundation, as it may happen if we delay any longer. Your stay at Naples will very likely be prolonged, for I beg you not to leave the city before the affair is brought to a conclusion. You must moreover write to me from Naples; for if things are protracted too long, we shall let you know what is to be done. . . .

After an autograph sketch, partly illegible, preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 78.

To the King of Naples.

Petition for founding a house at Caposele.

[1746.]

The undersigned, missionary secular priests, humbly expose to your Majesty the following facts:

Having during this year given missions in the archdiocese of Conza, they have been most urgently asked by the Most Reverend Archbishop[1] and by the people to establish themselves in this diocese, particularly in the territory of Caposele. Here there is a church under the title of *Mater Domini* together with a house containing a few rooms. These priests could thus help the souls in this vast archdiocese whom the distance from Naples deprives of many spiritual aids, especially of missions.

Prostrate, therefore, at the feet of your Majesty, who are so zealous for the welfare of your vassals, they humbly supplicate you to deign to give your royal consent so that the petitioners may live together in the convent of *Mater Domini*, and may also enlarge the house which is at present too small. In the mean time profoundly humbling themselves before the royal throne they promise that they will always pray more and more to the divine Majesty for the happiness of your kingdom.

After a copy marked with the following motto written by the hand of St. Alphonsus: "Live Jesus and Mary!—Memorial for Caposele."

[1] Mgr. Giuseppe Nicolai, Archbishop of Conza from 1731 till 1759.

LETTER 79.

To Father Giovanni Mazzini, Rector at Pagani.

Various regulations in regard to studies.

Live Jesus and Mary!

[TROIA], November 27, [1746].

I write you in all haste this Sunday morning, the last day of the mission. The concourse of the people, as well as the praise that we have received, was truly wonderful. The people say that they never had such a mission. *Soli Deo, etc.*

As for the promised help, I have learned that my father placed at my disposal not two hundred ducats, as I thought, but only one hundred. Hence fifty ducats are for you.

I shall send the manuscripts, etc., to Don Francesco.[1] But I wish that he should continue to compose his treatise on Scholastic Theology, and I require of him that he should consult no other books than those of Habert. Let him only put into it, but in a more abbreviated form, what is found in Habert, leaving out one or the other proof or useless objection. Tell him to obey without making a reply; and for mercy's sake let him attend more to clearness than to elegance of style.

I rejoice at what I hear about Don Nicola;[2] let him apply himself to his studies but little, till he has entirely recovered. It is sufficient if he only listens without writing. Let Don Biagio [Amarante] go out, and point out to him, as you think best, the walks that he is to take.

Let all recommend me to Jesus and Mary.

After the Roman edition.

1 Father Francesco Sanseverino, who afterwards became Archbishop of Palermo.

2 D. Nicola Muscarelli, a student of the Congregation.

LETTER 80.

To Sister Maria Celeste Poppa in the Monastery of the Annunciation at Foggia.

He points out what should be done in order to abolish the figured chant.

Live Jesus and Mary!

S. MARIA DELLA CONSOLAZIONE, January 30, [1747].

I answer your letter. You are not obliged to obey in that which regards the figured chant;[1] for if it knew all, the Sacred Congregation would certainly forbid this cursed chant. But since hell is making so many efforts to re-establish its use, why should you not do something on your part for the love of Jesus Christ? I would advise you and Sister Crocifissa, or you alone, secretly to address another letter to the Sacred Congregation, in which you might state the facts as follows: "The figured chant has just been abolished in our monastery; from it resulted innumerable disorders in the monasteries of Foggia on account of the teachers who had to be employed, the meals and refreshments that had to be offered to seculars, especially during Holy Week, without speaking of the distractions given to the nuns, of the vanity that this chant provoked, of the expense, of the faults against the Rule, and of other inconveniences. Now we have heard that application has been made to the Sacred Congregation to have this prohibition removed. But perhaps no statement was made about all the abuses that we have just enumerated. Hence to obey the dictates of our conscience and to promote the honor of Jesus Christ, we have believed it to be our duty to point out the disorders that have resulted therefrom, and that have stirred up general murmurings at Foggia and outside of it; and this in order that your Eminences (*the*

[1] See Letter 71.

plural must be used) far from permitting what is asked of you, might formally and forever forbid it."

Finish the petition by these words: *The undersigned, full of gratitude, will pray to God to reward you.*

The petition should have at the beginning the words: *Eminent Sirs.*

It should end as follows: *Sister Maria Celeste Poppa and Sister Maria Crocifissa Petitto, professed religious of the monastery of the Annunciation at Foggia, have the honor of exposing to your Eminences the following facts: The use of figured music has been lately abolished in our monastery*, as above.

On the envelope you should write:

To his Eminence

The Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. — Rome.

Send, then, secretly your letter to Sister Maria Celeste of the Most Holy Saviour[1] that she may frank it at the post-office by paying two or three grains;[2] tell her from me that there is question of an affair of very great importance to the glory of God.

This measure will cause you trouble; but do not hesitate to take it, and if you have to suffer on account of it, suffer for the love of Jesus Christ. If you neglect this matter, and the answer having once come from Rome and the crying abuse having been re-established, you will perhaps not be able to remedy it, and this would be for you a cause of continual remorse.

As for direction, continue freely to be guided by the advice of your confessor, and go on whether you are cold or not. It is well to have the holy fear of God, that is, the

[1] Sister Maria Celeste Crostarosa of whom we have given a short notice above (Letter 6) had founded at Foggia the monastery of the Most Holy Saviour about the year 1739.

[2] 1 grain = fr. 0.0425.

fear of displeasing him; but confidence should always overcome fear. Dilate unceasingly your heart by confidence in the infinite goodness of God and in the merits of Jesus Christ with the desire to become the first saint in Paradise, if such is the good pleasure of the Lord, not for your own good, but in order to render greater glory to God, and to love Jesus Christ more. Always pray to Jesus and Mary for me. I remain, etc. Live Jesus and Mary!

Acquaint your confessor with everything. As to Sister Maria Emanuella, if your confessor puts you under obedience to give her a reprimand, do so through obedience, but do not continue to treat with this Sister in a familiar way. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your servant.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 81.

To Sister Maria Crocifissa Petitto, at Foggia.

The same subject.

S. MARIA DELLA CONSOLAZIONE, [January 30, 1747].

All goes well. Continue in all security to follow the direction of your confessor, and desire once for all to become a saint. I have written to Sister Celeste what I wish you to do to prevent this cursed chant. Don Cesare [Sportelli] is not here. I will see, etc. Tell your sister that she is foolish to act thus. Pray always to Jesus and Mary for me.

Live Jesus and Mary!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After an old copy.

LETTER 82.

To Sister Maria Celeste Poppa.

The same subject. — Utility of persecutions.

Live Jesus and Mary!

S. Maria della Consolazione, [March 10, 1747].

I have received your letter, full as it is of fears and human considerations. A fine spouse of Jesus Christ is she who is afraid of being persecuted for the love of Jesus Christ! You have performed a good action,[1] and now you repent of it! Do you not know that it is a fault to repent of the good that one has done? — But you say, *I shall be persecuted. — Amen*. You should rejoice at this, even desire it, and not fear it. *Beati qui persecutionem patiuntur, propter justitiam*. [Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake. — *Matt.* v. 10.] I would like that, for the love of Jesus Christ, you would be without ceasing exposed to the persecutions of the world. You very well know the disturbances that have been created; and if you do not know them, I know them and all Foggia knows them. For pity's sake, do not exhibit again such pusillanimity; if not I shall almost lose the hope of seeing you one day in heaven. I say the same thing to Sister Maria [Crocifissa]. Do what I have written to you, and pray for me. I also ask the prayers of Sister Maria [Crocifissa]. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the Roman edition.

1 It seems that the Sisters had written to the Sacred Congregation and then through fear of persecutions had afterwards repented of this courageous act.

LETTER 83.

To Father Giovanni Mazzini?

Confidence of the saint in the Blessed Virgin.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NAPLES,[1] June 25, [1747].

In reference to the affairs at Nocera our opponents announce that they will be victorious. I firmly hope, however, that through the protection of the Blessed Virgin this will not be the case.

The *exequatur* for Caposele is already in my hands, and without conditions. Live Jesus and Mary!

Offer in the evening a special prayer to the Blessed Virgin; for we wish to make an attempt to obtain from the king the approbation of our Rule. Have also Communions offered for this purpose. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 84.

To the Priest Girolamo Ferrara, Novice of the Congregation at Ciorani.

Vocation and family affairs. — Examination of a particular case.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

[NAPLES], July 1, [1747].

May the will of God be always done! My dear Girolamo: The news[2] about your brother's death has made me make a powerful act of resignation.

[1] During this year the saint remained at Naples about three months, in order to attend to the affairs of the Congregation and to gain the law-suit over the enemies of the house at Pagani.

[2] D. Girolamo had scarcely entered the novitiate when he received the sad news of the sudden death of his brother.

To be short, if your two sisters had sufficient means to live at home, I should not hesitate to counsel you to remain in the Congregation; for there is morally no danger in regard to their virtue; in fact even in case you should die, this danger would not exist, since one of them is already old enough to take care of the house.

The only difficulty is that, as the revenues consist of rents, I do not know whether women without the help of a man would succeed in collecting the dues; but you know the people and the customs of the country, and may be able to settle this question better than I.

As for placing your sisters in a convent, my dear Girolamo, this is a matter that seems to me to be very difficult, and even morally impossible. At first, it would be difficult to find a convent that would be willing to receive persons so aged; and besides, they would reluctantly give their consent to be shut up there (this would require a divine vocation), in order to permit you to retire among us. Moreover, if no one remains at home, who will take care of the rents, and would pay what would be owing to the convent? You must, therefore, think no more about your plan in regard to the convent.

It would be more easy to admit that your sisters could quietly live at home without you; and even if this would now appear to them impossible, yet if they knew that you have decided not to leave the Congregation, and if they become convinced of this by experience during a certain time, I should think that they would then find means of subsisting by exacting the payment of what is coming to them, just as they would have to do if you were to die. The archpriest[1] seems to hold for certain that you are obliged to return to your family. There is no doubt that in a similar case Rome would grant even to professed religious the permission to leave the convent and to return home.

[1] The archpriest of Teora, the birth-place of D. Girolamo.

But we must observe that it is one thing to have the permission to live in one's family, and another thing to be obliged to do so when there is no danger to morals, and there is a way of subsisting without being there to give assistance.

However, I can see no difficulty in allowing you to spend some time in your family in order to regulate the affairs, and especially to settle the pretensions of your married sister by arranging everything as well as you can. But I do not wish you to interfere too much in other disputes for fear that you might furnish an additional reason for being obliged to remain with your family.

I see with pleasure the affection that you bear towards the Congregation; but I prefer to have you yourself in the Congregation rather than your property.

The archpriest wishes, he writes, that you should hasten to come to the assistance of your family; but I think that there is no need of hurry; perhaps it would even be better for you to remain with us to see how things will end, and to write that you are bound by the vow of obedience, etc.,[1] that your sisters are grown up and reasonable, that they have enough on which they can live. Try this means first, and you will see what will be the result. I do not doubt that at first sight such an answer will create a great stir; but I believe that in time people will persuade themselves that you are not disposed to return home, nor to leave the Congregation, and then they will become reconciled; and as *vexatio dat intellectum* [vexation gives understanding], I believe that your sisters will consent to see to the revenues themselves and find means to live comfortably without you.

The Doctors of Salamanca[2] say with Sanchez, Castro-

[1] D. Girolamo by the advice of Father Cafaro had made the preceding year the vow of entering the Congregation of the Most Holy Saviour.

[2] *Tr.* 15, c. 3, n. 54.

palao, Suarez (and Bonacina is of the same opinion), that it is only in case of extreme necessity, either of poverty or of danger of prostitutiou, that the brother is obliged to come to the assistance of his sister by leaving the Community, especially if he is bound by a vow or an oath. Now such a necessity does not exist here.

However, my dear Girolamo, in order to be able to give you a decided answer I should have to speak to you orally; but I desire that the Rector [Father Andrea Villani] and Fathers N. and N. should first hold a consultation about this matter, and that then they should write to me what they think; for the case is so complicated.

Why could not your sisters retire to the house of your married sister and live with her? In order that they might be received there, I should not make any difficulty if you would make a present of your share, etc. I repeat that we need not be in too great a hurry. Let the affair first be maturely discussed with the Fathers; then communicate to me the opinions, and we shall come to a decision; for if you go home, I know not what entreaties the archpriest and the Archbishop [of Conza] may have in reserve for you, so that you will nc more be able to extricate yourself.

Let us have recourse to prayer, and let us hope that God will enlighten us to know surely his will; this is all that you desire, and this is all that I desire. I remain, etc. — Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 85.

To a Father of the Congregation.

Course of action in order to save the vocation of Don Ferrara.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

[NAPLES], July 4, [1747].

Father Andrea writes to me from Ciorani what Don Girolamo says. — I am decidedly of opinion that he should not depart from Ciorani, as I have written to him; and if he departs, I shall impose it upon him as a matter of conscience. I positively say that his sisters stand in no need of his assistance. As to matters in litigation and to other necessities, let the sisters take care of these things themselves as they did before: *Mortui sepeliant mortuos suos.* [Let the dead bury the dead.] And if something has been overlooked, or if a suit has been lost, what matters it? Don Girolamo should not on that account lose his vocation, or expose himself to lose it. I regret to see by his letter that he inclines somewhat to go to Teora; but he has finally left the matter to be decided by me.[1] I have recommended myself to God, and what I have just said is my decided opinion. Now you will notice that the archpriest [of Teora] will still write to him, or send him word, etc. Father Andrea [Villani] should then take care not to let him read the letters of the archpriest, as he let him read the last letter. This was wrong; it would have been sufficient had he told Father Girolamo about the affair, because the archpriest caused him to have scruples, and you know that Don Girolamo is naturally scrupulous. This scruple I am willing to take upon my own conscience. As much as possible prevent him from seeing any one that has come

[1] D. Girolamo abided by the saint's decision, persevered in the Institute, and on March 25, 1748, made his profession.

from Teora. Moreover, if a letter should come from the archpriest or the Grand-Vicar, and the letter might renew his scruples, let Father Andrea keep him in ignorance of it; send me the letter, and I will answer the archbishop.

I remain, etc. — Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa! Recommend me to Jesus Christ and to Mary.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 86.

To Father Giovanni Mazzini, Rector of the House at Pagani.

Solicitude of the saint to obtain the royal approbation of his Institute.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

[NAPLES], July 4, [1747].

Send this little document at once to Father Andrea at Ciorani, so that on Friday without fail he may return it through Angelillo. It is an abridgment of the Rule which I composed with D. Cesare [Sportelli] and which is to be presented to the king. I wish, however, that Father Andrea should see the manuscript before it is copied, so that he may make some remarks; and if your Reverence before sending it to Father Andrea would look it over and note whatever you think needs improvement, I should be greatly pleased. But there must be no delay, as in every case, it must be forwarded to Ciorani on Friday. Send, therefore, this letter to Father Andrea. You will notice that we have written only what is most necessary, and that we have purposely omitted matters of little importance. In reference to that most important affair about which Don Cesare has spoken to you I yesterday called upon Brancone,[1] who told me that he had forgotten it. It will be necessary that we again apply to him. In the mean time, continue the prayers, since this affair is of the greatest

1 This was Marquis Brancone, Secretary of State.

importance to our Congregation. Hence the necessity of offering many prayers.

You will remark that we have purposely inserted *oath* instead of *vow* of perseverance, in order to take away the fear that people have of seeing a new Order established. The fact is the oath from the obligation of which the bishops cannot free any one, is more solid than the vow, in regard to which they certainly can give a dispensation.

My purgatory at Naples still continues, and will continue, I do not know how long. I remain, etc. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Recommend me to Jesus and Mary. Send me from Ciorani a pair of white stockings. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 87.

To one of the General Consultors of the Congregation.

He complains to him of the difficulties raised against the project of obtaining from the king the approbation of the Institute.

[NAPLES], July 4, 1747.

To tell the truth, if it were not for the sake of the Congregation, I would leave everything and would shut myself up in a cell at Ciorani without busying myself about anything; but my conscience will not permit such a thing. I imagined that your Reverence and the others would have referred to me this affair in which I proceed so carefully, or at least to me and D. Cesare [Sportelli] as the Fathers of Pagani have done; but your letter filled with scruples conditions and fears has caused me greater trouble. You leave me in this disturbed state so that I know not what to do. I do not wish however to hear more complaints in the Congregation; I have heard enough of them.

Remember well that in regard to the affairs we are in

great hopes; for Brancone takes an interest in them, the king is favorable; the more so since Father Pepe[1] has spoken to him; the Grand Almoner wishes to help us; later on things will change and evil impressions will be dissipated. Does it therefore seem prudent to protract things? I assure you in the presence of Jesus Christ that if this great affair miscarries there will be no longer any remedy. I say this *great affair*, because on it depends the stability of the Congregation. All your fears are frivolous: the greatest fear that we should have is that the Congregation, deprived of the king's approbation, may never have true stability and may perhaps end by being dissolved.

Now, this being said, I decline all responsibility before God; it is sufficient for me if the affair does not fail through my fault. I do not speak thus because I wish to play the part of a founder and of a despot. You see how I am seeking counsel in my doubts and how I have been seeking it from the beginning. When one sees that things are done with maturity and discretion, do you think it praiseworthy to wish to thwart them? I pray to Jesus Christ to close his eyes to my sins and not to destroy on their account this work which is his own. You should also have the prayers continued.

Why should you put before me so many difficulties which you see in this union?[2] I am myself so much opposed to it that I will never give my consent, for the reason that you give and for other reasons, except in a case that is morally impossible, since this affair could not be brought about except *causa cognita* [the cause being known] and with your consent. . . [The rest of the letter is wanting.]

After an old copy.

[1] Father Francesco Pepe, S. J., a friend of St. Alphonsus.

[2] D. Vincenzo Mannarini, at that time Superior of the Congregation of the Most Blessed Sacrament, absolutely wished to re-unite his Congregation to the Congregation of St. Alphonsus.

LETTER 88.

To Father Giovanni Mazzini.

Request for counsel in a difficult affair.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NAPLES, July 22, [1747].

If the affair had gone on as I wished it, it would have gone on too smoothly; but now it will go on with many embarrassments and much labor; but the case is not desperate.

This morning I received the answer. Our friend [Marquis Brancone] has spoken with great force. The king has conceived a high idea of our work, but he is a little afraid of new Institutes. Hence he desires the affair to pass through the hands of the Grand Almoner and the Royal Council so as to find out what views are held by them. The king, however, has so high an opinion of our work that he himself has thought that we should write to the Pope to ask him to give up one of the many convents that exist, and to put into it members of our Congregation. To-day the royal ordinance with a copy of our Rule is to be sent to the Grand Almoner, who will make his report.

I also spoke this morning to the Grand Almoner, who repeated to me more than once: "Unite with Mannarini, and come together to see me." I positively refused to entertain the idea of union, because such a thing would be impossible, as the Institute is different from ours, has schools, and prefers cities, etc.[1] This I said and will always say. But a thought has come to my mind which has agitated me in a thousand ways. I thought within myself: "Let us secure now the king's approbation on which depends that of Rome, and consequently all the rest; and

[1] The Congregation of the Most Holy Sacrament took charge of public schools and could have houses in the cities.

then *Deus et dies* [God and time]. The partisans of Mannarini will attend to their own affairs and we to ours." Wherefore I regard this as certain: the Grand Almoner is favorable to Mannarini, and would not like to see our Congregation approved, while to the Congregation that is protected by him the approbation is refused. Hence if we wish both Congregations to be approved together, he will be in our favor; but if this is not done, the contrary will happen, and the affair will be a failure, because the king wishes to depend on his Council.

Here are then my considerations: On the one hand, I consider that by obtaining this approbation, the establishment of the Congregation would be secured; but which Congregation is to be approved, ours or theirs? our Rule or theirs? These are the differences that would have to be settled, and it appears to me to be most difficult, because we do not wish to change our Institute nor are they willing to change theirs.

Come together, talk over the matter, reflect upon it; and then on Monday or Tuesday let D. Cesare be so kind as to come to me at Naples and report to me what have been the views expressed. Send some one to Ciorani to-morrow with this letter, and let them also tell you what is their opinion. The case is very embarrassing. I do not write to Ciorani so as not to be obliged to repeat the same thing. Every evening let all our houses say the prayers for the king; and let this be done if possible at Mass.

As for the *suit*,[1] information will be given at the beginning of next week.

After the Neapolitan edition of 1848.

[1] This is the law-suit brought by D. Francesco Contaldi against the house at Pagani.

LETTER 89.

To Mgr. Celestino Galiano, Grand Almoner.

Considerations in view of the memorial that is to be presented for obtaining the royal approbation of the Institute.

[Month of July, 1747.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

For the *report* that is to be presented we ask to subjoin the following reflections:

1. Experience has already proved how useful and even necessary the missions are for the rural districts, especially of the kingdom of Naples, where the hamlets are so numerous, so thickly settled, and at the same time, so destitute of spiritual help. Although the city of Naples is well provided with such help, yet this is not the case in the remaining part of the kingdom; and although from the city of Naples and other populous cities of the kingdom every year various missions are given, these labors nevertheless correspond only in a feeble measure to the immense want that exists, so that many places remain from twenty to thirty years without a mission. Hence this is the cause why so many people are found there without even knowing the necessary mysteries of faith. It, therefore, seems to be very necessary that there should be more houses of this Congregation of missionaries of the Most Holy Saviour, who devote themselves to this exercise and to the spiritual culture of these country places, for which the missions are so useful and even necessary. They could then spend their time as well in instructing in divine things so many poor people that live in these places, as in remedying the bad confessions that are made, especially in the kingdom of Naples where the rural hamlets are as numerous as they are populous.

2. Moreover, this work is known to be most useful on

account of the continual assistance that it furnishes to the places where missions have been given. The missions do certainly a great deal of good; but the misfortune is that, if after the missions have been given, the people do not see the missionaries and are not able to go where they live, they fall back into their old evil ways. This Congregation has for its aim not only to go through the country, helping the people who mostly need spiritual help, and going in search of them in the most abandoned places and in hamlets, but it has, besides, for its chief rule that its members must return from time to time to the places where the missions have been given for the purpose of preaching, of administering the holy sacraments; and thus they renew and preserve the fruits of the missions. And for this end the Congregation has as its fundamental rule to establish its houses outside of the inhabited places and in the centre of the dioceses, for these reasons: that they may better attend to this duty of travelling continually through the country; that the country people round about may find it convenient to have recourse to them as often as they wish in order to see the missionaries in the church and settle the affairs of their conscience; and finally, that in these dioceses an opportunity be given to ecclesiastics and priests to make their retreat while remaining in the houses of the missionaries.

After an autograph sketch preserved in the archives of the house at Pagani.

LETTER 90.

To Father Paul Cafaro, his Director.

The king of Naples, after the death of Mgr. Domenico Rosso, Archbishop of Palermo, wished to promote to the archbishopric our saint, who thus expresses his dislike for such a dignity.

[End of July, 1747.]

..... Now we must use entreaties, we must pray, because I see myself exposed to a grave persecution and in the greatest distress. The king has resolved to select me to be archbishop of Palermo; but I would rather hide myself in the woods than accept such a dignity.[1]

Quoted by Tannoia, "Life of St. Alphonsus," Book ii. Chapter xxviii.

LETTER 91.

To Father Giovanni Mazzini.

Difficulties that the saint meets with at Naples on account of the approbation of the Institute.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

[NAPLES], August 1, [1747].

I write in haste a letter for all, as I have but little time. I have your letters and those from Ciorani. You must now pray to Jesus Christ to give me strength and light, for I have lost sleep, appetite, etc. Yesterday morning the Grand Almoner almost absolutely refused at first to take our affair into consideration; afterwards, however, it was taken up; may God grant that the report may not be adverse! The Blessed Virgin can obtain for us success; hence

1 Father Cesare Sportelli thus wrote from Naples to Father Mazzini: "Father Rector Major has been strongly urged to accept the episcopate, and is still in great fear about it. He has, however, made a wonderful defence."

continue and have others to continue the prayers. To-morrow I must return to the charge.

This morning I came to a successful understanding with Mannarini and spoke to him decidedly on a certain point. He has acquiesced in a few things.

These are not things that should be written in a letter, either because it is not expedient to confide them to paper, or because we need each time ten pages to say everything.

In the midst of this confusion and embarrassment the news from the novitiate consoles me; especially do I rejoice to hear that Don Girolamo [Ferrara] is so happy and cheerful.

Father Cesare[1] may now set out for Caposele with God's holy blessing. Father Andrea has thought fit to put me to shame with all his humiliations, which are but subjects of confusion to me. But it is impossible at a distance to confer with one another by letter.

Father Cesare should speak to the Archbishop of Conza to find out in what way it might be brought about at Rome that a Cardinal be appointed by the Pope to interest himself in having the Congregation approved. For if the Blessed Virgin would help us to succeed with the king, etc., we should take care that at least the cause of the approbation may be introduced at Rome.

Recommend me to Jesus and Mary. Perhaps I shall send you a priest who is already a missionary. I must however maturely examine this matter which is rather a delicate affair and needs a dispensation. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the Roman edition.

1 Father Cesare Sportelli was then to treat in Caposele of the affair of a new foundation of the house of *Mater Domini*.

LETTER 92.

To a General Consultor.

Trials and annoyances that the saint has to endure at Naples.

[August, 1747.]

..... Continue to pray for the Congregation and for me who am here pining away at Naples while treating with those ministers who are making life a burden to me. My heart is filled with bitterness; I cannot endure this any longer; I should like to run away, and yet I cannot leave Naples. I must assist in bringing our affairs to a close as soon as possible.

A consultation is now going on, and our affair has been proposed in the Royal Council. The king has thought of adopting a plan which will perhaps be more useful to the Congregation.

D. Vincenzo [Mannarini] is going about trying to effect a union; but I always put forward the excuse that such does not really appear to be the will of God. It is my firm conviction that this union cannot be accomplished, nor shall I ever give my consent to it.....

After an incomplete copy.

LETTER 93.

To Father D. Cesare Sportelli.

A power of attorney in regard to the founding of a house at Caposele.

[November 27, 1747.]

This present power of attorney, *per epistolam* [through letter], is given by me the undersigned Father D. Alfonso

de Liguori, Rector Major of the priests, called the priests of the Most Holy Saviour, and of all their houses, in my own name as well as in the name of all my companions, present and future.

Not being able to be personally present to transact the affairs of [Conza and Caposele], and confiding in the fidelity and integrity of the Very Rev. Father Cesare Sportelli, my companion, who although absent is just as if he were present, I appoint and constitute him my procurator [attorney] and that of my companions, present and future, with all the sufficient and necessary power, *even* with the clause *ut alter ego* [another self] to make as it will seem best one or more agreements, with the Illustrious Monsignor D. Giuseppe Niccolaï, Archbishop of Conza, with the Reverend clergy of Caposele and with all other benefactors, who intend to co-operate in the establishment of those Fathers, priests of Caposele, and especially in the place or monastery, called *S. Maria Mater Domini*, where there is question of conveying to them the church and the house situated there, with the actual annual income of four hundred ducats *to be assigned* for their maintenance, that is, a hundred and fifty ducats from the Reverend clergy, and the rest from the Most Illustrious Monsignor, the archbishop and other benefactors; with all the agreements and conditions that will appear to be suitable, and about which agreements have been made by the said procurator appointed by me, promising to ratify and confirm them all and again to ratify them should it be necessary.

Ciorani, November 27, 1747.

Alfonso de Liguori, *Rector Major.*
Constantino Zampoli, witness.
D. Andrea Gaudiello, "
D. Francesco di Mari, "

I Francesco Aniello Zampoli, notary, attest that the foregoing signature is that made by the hand of the above-

mentioned Very Rev. Father Don Alfonso de Liguori, Superior-General.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 94.

To the Priest Francesco Margotta[1] of Calitri.

He admits him into the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, December 7, 1747.

My dear and much esteemed Francesco: I must inform you that last evening we read, first, the letter that contained the news of the new foundation [of the house at Caposele]; then your letter in which you make known to us your resolution. But I really do not know which gave to all a greater joy, the news of the foundation or the news of the resolution that you, my dear Brother, have taken. I use the title *my dear Brother*, because, in accordance with what I herewith communicate to you, I receive you to-day

[1] We read the following account of this estimable member of the Institute in the catalogue of the Congregation:

"On the 7th of December, 1747, Francesco Margotta a priest and a native of Calitri, was admitted into the Congregation. He was in his forty-eighth year, and had been for some time a missionary and a member of the venerable Congregation of Father Pavone, established in the Collegio Massimo of the Jesuit Fathers at Naples. He found himself necessarily engaged in numerous domestic affairs; but he employed them for the profit of the Congregation by stipulating an advantageous donation in favor of the new house at Caposele. The care of his affairs kept him for some time at Calitri, and our holy founder permitted him to begin his novitiate at home, where he remained till March 3, when he proceded to Ciorani to complete it. He made his profession in the presence of Father Villani, July 2, 1748. After rendering the greatest services to the Congregation, which he likewise made the heir of all his property, he died a holy death, August 11, 1764."

into our Congregation as a brother and as a dear companion, so that your novitiate begins to-day even though you may be obliged to remain at Calitri for some time in order to settle your affairs. You have given to the Congregation all that of which you could dispose; but know that our Congregation and each one of us love you in such a manner that even if you had brought nothing, we would gladly have admitted you. The reason of this is because in you we shall receive a confrère that really wishes to become a saint. I am quite confident that you will attain the object of your desires, especially after you have maturely considered the matter, free from all excitement or passion, and your director, as well as the archbishop, has fully concurred in all your plans.

Remain, therefore, dear Brother, at Calitri without the least uneasiness as long as it will be convenient to you to arrange your affairs. It is true, we are all impatiently awaiting your arrival; yet I wish that you should settle matters in a quiet way. Such is your ardent spirit that you will need no motives to induce you to enter solitude as soon as possible. I can imagine, and am convinced, that your heart is sighing for the moment in which you may be able to enter the asylum that God has destined for you from all eternity that you might sanctify yourself. I would be delighted to see you here before my departure for Naples whither you know I must go either the day after New Year or after Epiphany to attend to the business of the Congregation. But I repeat, I do not wish that you should become disquieted on this account; for if I have not this consolation I shall offer it as a sacrifice to Jesus Christ. Be assured that all are expecting you with open arms. Above all have Fathers Paolo [Cafaro] and [D. Girolamo] Ferrara heard the news with inexpressible joy. To-day all the novices will go to Communion for you in order that Jesus Christ may bring to a speedy conclusion all your most

necessary affairs, and you may be enabled to come among us as soon as possible.

From this time forward you must pray for me, but in a way different from that in which you have done heretofore, since from this moment I impose upon you this duty of praying for me by virtue of obedience, because you are now one of us. Hence every morning at your Mass and during your thanksgiving recommend me to Jesus Christ that he may bestow upon me *a love for him and a love for his Mother Mary, and that I may accomplish the divine will* in a perfect manner. I point out in a precise way my intention, so that you may always have it impressed on your mind what prayer you must say, and may not forget it.

On my part I shall in return do you the same favor. Therefore, in the name of the Most Blessed Trinity, of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and of Mary Immaculate, I admit you, receive you and bless you, that you may belong entirely to God, as such is doubtless his holy will. As soon as you write to your director, Don Angelo, I enjoin upon you the duty of expressing to him my thanks for the permission that he has granted you, and of telling him at the same time that the whole Congregation will always owe him a debt of gratitude. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 95.

To Father Andrea Villani, Rector of the House at Ciorani.

(This letter was written in the name of the saint by Father D. Celestino de Robertis.)

The saint consents to the making of a new agreement with the founder of the house at Ciorani but on certain conditions. [1]

Praised be the Most Blessed Sacrament and Mary Immaculate!

NAPLES, February 4, 1748.

In reference to the affair about Nocera, our Father [D. Alfonso] does not think it well to have anything done at the present time, because there would be too much risk on account of circumstances which cannot be mentioned in a letter, and the loss of this case might be for us the loss of other foundations. The Father wishes to have your opinion and that of Father Saverio [Rossi] about this matter.

As regards the letter of Don Andrea [Sarnelli], let him know immediately (for this purpose Father Saverio should go there at once if he can, or your Reverence should go, because he [Don Alfonso] wishes to receive an answer by Saturday) that our Father entertains the greatest affection and veneration for him who with so much love has brought us to Ciorani. Hence in order to comply with his desires, he consents to the incurring of some loss, but not so great a loss as would give him scruples of conscience. For the rest, he will do what he can to please him. In short, let him know this in these or similar words, according as you think best. Tell him, therefore, that of the one hundred and fifty ducats, which he now wishes to give us annually

[1] On the occasion of the foundation of the house at Ciorani, the priest, D. Andrea Sarnelli, a brother of our Venerable Gennaro had given us by a public deed the sum of two hundred ducats annually. Wishing better to regulate this donation, he made to St. Alphonsus new propositions, which form the subject of the present letter.

during his life, we cannot put ourselves under any obligation of spending a part for the benefit of the church. We shall do what we can, as he has seen us do in the midst of all our miseries; but we must not be put under any obligation. He knows the straits in which we are, and so for pity's sake, he should not oblige us to do such a thing.

In regard to the establishment of other houses, of which he speaks in his letter, it is well for him to know that we have had hints given us by the ministers not to accept any more houses. Our Father, therefore, plainly says that he will not have the boldness to ask for new foundations. He [Don Sarnelli] sees how many subjects we are, how poor we are; therefore, he who loves us should help us as much as he can. He has already seen that we have always held him in high esteem. Tell him that when he wishes to make the contract, our Father will be ready; but inform him that Father Alfonso himself wishes to draw up the minutes of the contract so as to avoid all litigation, which may afterwards be begun by the relatives of Don Andrea who, he already knows, can hardly look at us. For this reason it will be necessary for him to give us all the papers, or at least an abstract of them, so as to be able to protect ourselves.

All this you will say to him, and send an answer by Saturday. Our Father also says that it will be necessary to write this new contract in words other than those in which the first contract was drawn up. We have lately received information about certain points that cannot be intrusted to paper, and that make it our duty to ask Don Andrea to write out this agreement. The foundation of Ciorani has not the express approbation of the king. The brother of Don Andrea has uttered the threat that when the latter dies, measures will be taken to drive us at once from Ciorani. This, besides other things, is what we know from a good source. Hence should Don Andrea wish to give us

less than one hundred and twenty ducats, it would still be necessary to make a new contract; but I repeat, it must be worded differently, and state that the donation is destined, *not for the Congregation*, as was mentioned in the first contract, *but for us, priests of the Most Holy Saviour, as private individuals.* It might also be well, by way of greater precaution, to add to this donation the obligation of saying, for example, one Mass every month; but it must be remarked that this new contract does not depend at all on the first contract; for if ever the first should be annulled, the second would also be annulled. It is necessary to say that the first contract has become null and void, and that regard should be had only to the second, in which it is mentioned that a donation is no longer made to the Congregation to found a house at Ciorani, but that it is bestowed upon us who are named in the contract, and to the priests, our companions who live and who will live in the house at Ciorani, and who are engaged in the care of souls,with the obligation of saying those Masses, of performing the exercises on Saturdays in honor of the Madonna, or otherwise, according to the wishes of Don Andrea. Thus we must insist with prudence on the point that we ourselves have to plan this contract. As for Don Andrea, it will surely be sufficient for him if he has substantially all that he desired. Try then to see him immediately and to conclude the affair without delay, for Don Andrea is changeable.

Preserve this letter, for it may be useful for the object that we have in view. In case Don Andrea wishes to make the contract at once, send us the paper that he has drawn up, and add to it a copy of the beginning of the document that concerns Caposele, for our Father wishes to ask more advice. But try your best to bring the matter to a speedy conclusion. Believe me, my dear Father,

Your servant and brother,

CELESTINO DE ROBERTIS,

of the Most Holy Saviour.

LETTER 96.

To the Priest D. Francesco Margotta, at Calitri.

Solicitude of the saint in regard to the observance of the Rule.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NAPLES, February 7, 1748.

My dear Francesco: I am still at Naples to finish the affairs of the Congregation, and I hope to finish them soon. However, it seems to me that a thousand years have still to elapse before matters can be concluded. We are all of us praying continually for you that you may soon come among us.

The Archbishop [of Conza] was very much displeased with me since for what I believe to be very good reasons I did not allow Father Cafaro to preach the Lenten sermons at Calitri. Father Paolo [Cafaro] must during Lent direct the theological studies at Iliceto; and this cannot be done except by him as he is the author of the text-book that is used. Father Cafaro will not therefore preach the Lenten sermons. Besides, as he has no Lenten sermons prepared it would be undertaking great and unnecessary labor since the preaching of Lenten sermons is foreign to our Institute. This last was my principal reason; for the preaching of Lenten sermons is an occupation altogether against our Rule; and if I permitted it on this occasion, I could no longer refuse the same thing to other bishops who have our houses in their dioceses. Moreover, the archbishop has promised, in a letter which is preserved, that he would treat us as other bishops do; and in the contract it is expressly mentioned that he is to employ us in accordance with our Rule.

As for yourself, if you do not speak earnestly with the archbishop by telling him that you have been already

received, etc., you will never be able to tear yourself away. Represent to him that it is a matter of conscience with you in regard to your vocation. This is enough, for you are not wanting in judgment or prudence. After all, what must we do? We must be patient; perhaps our regret in not seeing you among us is greater than yours.

Recommend me to Jesus Christ that I may soon be able to leave Naples. It seems to me that a thousand years are still to pass by before I finish with these blessed ministers who fill my heart with bitterness. If it were not for the Congregation I would have nothing to do with them.

If the archbishop complains of me, he does so unjustly. I believe that up to the present I have served him as well as I could; and to oblige him I have even been unmindful whether or not I pleased other bishops. God knows what I was obliged to do in order to send him now the Fathers that are to give missions to his people and retreats to his clergy. And if he wishes that Father Fiocchi who has been sent to give a retreat to the priests, should stay, as I have heard, to preach the Lenten sermons I shall even then give my consent, although this Father is destined for Nocera where he is much needed and where the bishop is greatly dissatisfied. I really do not know what more to do to satisfy him. But to trample upon the Rules and Constitutions in the very beginning, I cannot allow. When an occasion presents itself, communicate what I have written to the archbishop. I remain, etc. — Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 97.

To the Priest Don Andrea Sarnelli.

He gives his consent to the making of a new contract, but under certain conditions.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NAPLES, February 10, 1748.

My dear Don Andrea: I have already written two long letters to the Rector at Ciorani about the affair concerning which you wrote to me. Now I am answering your letter, and I say in substance that I am ready to do what you have written to me. I should however be pleased to have the contract renewed for the benefit of this house; because this new contract would now have to be drawn up in other words in order to render this foundation more firm. But at present I shall not write the words of the new contract. But when you have resolved to write it, it will be necessary for me to let you know everything. The contract will have to be worded as that one was worded for the founding of the house of Conza [at Caposele]. And if you are desirous of knowing its contents, I will make no difficulty in letting you know them. Let the Rector of Ciorani know your wish, for I have written to him all the particulars; let him see this letter, and he will tell you all.

What before all I recommend to you is secrecy, so that your relatives may not learn of this affair, and may not involve us in a law-suit after the death of the Baron,[1] as has already been said by them. I have no fear of the Baron nor of Don Nicola, because both have always favored us, and both are inclined to piety. I am however afraid of Don Domenico who, I know not why, cannot bear to see us at Ciorani, and when near the Chinese College these or similar words were used by him: *Only let my father die, and we shall see what will become of the Fathers at Ciorani.* As

1 The Baron Angelo Sarnelli, the father of Don Andrea.

for the other brother Don Francesco,[1] I know not whether he inclines towards Don Nicola or Don Domenico, and for this reason I should not like that anything should be known by Don Domenico in regard to the new contract.

This is sufficient. In regard to yourself I hope that there will be no difficulty (since you will have attained your end) in modifying the old contract, so that the house at Ciorani may be firmly established, and all danger of having law-suits may be removed.

I beg you to give me at once an answer for my own guidance, and I ask you not to change your mind in reference to what you have written to me. Recommend me to Jesus Christ. May the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Immaculate be praised! I remain,

Your very humble and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

[*P. S.*] My dear Don Andrea, excuse me for not answering your letter immediately, because I have been ill at Naples; it is now seven days that the weather has been very wet and I have been suffering from my chest. Recommend me to Jesus and Mary.

After the original preserved in the archives of the Redemptorist Fathers at Pagani.

LETTER 98.

To the King of Naples.

Petition to have his permission for the legal existence of the four houses of the Institute.

[February, 1748.]

Sire: The priest Alfonso de Liguori, together with his companions, missionaries of the so-called Congregation of

[1] D. Nicola, D. Domenico and D. Ciccio (or Francesco) were brothers of D. Andrea.

the Most Holy Saviour, humbly presents to your Majesty the following petition: Your Majesty not having thought it well to sanction with your royal permission the project of uniting their society to that of the priests of the Congregation of the Most Holy Sacrament so as to form only one Congregation[1] the suppliants ask you, Sire, to deign at least to recognize their four houses (and only these) in order that your royal authority may serve as a support to another work founded in favor of the poor people in the country, as your Majesty well knows. These houses are situated in the dioceses of Salerno, Nocera, Bovino, and Conza.

The undersigned declares that there is no desire of founding more houses but only of seeing established those that exist. And as for the purchase of property for the maintenance of these houses and of the work of the missions, he is satisfied with what your Majesty may think fit to arrange; provided he sees this holy work organized with the authority of your Majesty he will be satisfied with whatever is prescribed; because he does not wish that these houses should become rich, but only that they should have what is sufficient to maintain the work, for the propagation of God's glory and the profit of your Majesty's vassals.

If ever it should happen (may God forbid!) that the subjects of this Congregation should become faithless to their Institute, and the work should fail, the petitioner in his own name and in that of his companions will be content, and they even pray your Majesty that the Sovereign Pontiff be requested, to disband and suppress not only one or the other of the houses but the entire Congregation. Henceforward, the petitioner, in the name of the members of the

[1] From this petition we may perceive that although the saint was altogether opposed to the union of his Congregation with that of Don Vincenzo Mannarini, yet the Grand Almoner had himself endeavored to bring about this union.

whole Congregation, present and future, binds himself that they will not defend their conduct in any juridical way, but will submit in all things to whatever your Majesty shall see fit to arrange. The undersigned and all his companions desire nothing else than that this work may be pleasing to the zeal that inspires your Majesty for the good of the abandoned people in the country. The petitioner also hopes that in future this condition that is now made may also serve as a check on all the members of the Congregation and prevent them from being relaxed, and as an incentive to preserve the right spirit and continue the work as it has heretofore been carried on. If your Majesty deigns to favor this petition the undersigned will pray to God to reward you. May God grant that we receive this favor!

After a copy preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 99.

To the Sovereign Pontiff Benedict XIV.

The saint asks him for the apostolic approbation of his Congregation.

[March 30, 1748.]

Most Holy Father: The priest Alfonso de Liguori, a Neapolitan, and with other missionaries, his companions, having become associated under the title of the Most Holy Saviour, humbly supplicates and exposes to your Holiness what follows: Having for many years been giving missions as a member of the Congregation of the Apostolic Missions, erected in the cathedral at Naples, the undersigned observed how greatly abandoned are the poor people, especially in the country, of the vast territories of the kingdom. Since the year 1732 he has associated himself with the said priests, as his companions, under the direction of the late Monsignor Falcoia, Bishop of Castel-

lammare, for the purpose of devoting himself to aid by missions, instructions and other exercises, the souls of the poor in the country, who are mostly destitute of spiritual help, since they are frequently in want of those that may administer to them the sacraments, and to preach to them the word of God. Indeed, many of them for want of laborers approach death without even knowing the necessary mysteries of the faith, since there are few priests that devote themselves earnestly to the religious education of the poor country people on account of the expenses and also on account of the inconveniences that they have to suffer from such a task.

The undersigned have therefore since that time given assistance to the poor people by giving them missions, by going through the country visiting the most abandoned places of the six provinces of the kingdom. Their success was so great and universal that his Majesty, the king, having heard of it, and especially of the labors so profitable to a great number of shepherds in Puglia, deigned to make an annual appropriation for the maintenance of this holy work, recommending it as most useful for the general good of his kingdom.

His Eminence, the Archbishop of Naples, who governs his church with so much zeal, has also deigned to call the petitioners to render him services, and they have done so by giving missions in many villages of his diocese.

For this purpose, the petitioners, with the canonical approbation of the Ordinaries and also with the permission of the king, have united to live together in certain houses or secluded places, situated away from towns and villages in different parts of the kingdom. These houses are in the dioceses of Salerno, of Bovino, of Nocera, and finally, in the diocese of Conza, in which with the apostolic consent of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars there has been ceded to the petitioners the church of S. Maria

Mater Domini with the adjacent house, together with an income derived from a benefice given them by the clergy of Caposele, and other kinds of income assigned by certain benefactors, especially by the archbishop of the said diocese. Besides the missions to which the missionaries are constantly devoting themselves, there are given in these houses opportunities for the people who have had missions, to visit the missionaries so as to renew their confessions and become re-established by means of sermons. Moreover, in these houses are given more than once a year private spiritual exercises to the candidates for ordination, to the pastors and priests sent by their bishops, as well as to seculars. This has been a source of great profit both to themselves and to others, since by such exercises the priests come forth reformed, and are made worthy members of the sanctuary, to the benefit of their flocks. And all this work is continued, and is always increasing the concourse of the people and conferring spiritual benefits upon them.

The Lord has then greatly blessed this work, not only by the conversion of many abandoned souls and to the profit of the country places where the petitioners have been laboring, but also by an increase of subjects who have joined this Congregation, so that they number about forty members.

Most Holy Father, this is the state of the above-mentioned work. But if your Holines does not vouchsafe to grant the apostolic approbation, the work will not continue to meet with success. Prostrate, therefore, at the feet of your Holiness, the petitioner and his companions beseech you, by the love that your Holiness entertains for the glory of Jesus Christ and for the salvation of so many poor country people, who are the most abandoned children of the Church of God, to grant your apostolic consent, that the aforesaid members may constitute themselves a Congregation of secular priests, under the title of the Most

Holy Saviour. The Congregation would always be subject to the jurisdiction of the Ordinaries of the places, *ad instar* [like] the Congregation of Fathers of the Missions and of the Fathers called *Pious Workers*, with this difference that the members of the Congregation must always live outside of inhabited places, and in the centre of the most needy dioceses, so that they may be better able to devote themselves to the care of country people, and to be also more ready to give them assistance. May your Holiness also deign to approve the Rules that will in time be placed at your Holiness's feet. We hope that your Holiness, who has so much zeal for the salvation of souls, especially for the souls of poor country people (as has been proved by your Holiness's letter sent to the bishops of the kingdom of Naples that they should give all possible spiritual aid to the people by means of holy missions), may vouchsafe to establish by your supreme authority a work not only useful but also necessary for the many poor souls in the rural districts of this vast kingdom, who are living destitute of all spiritual help. For this favor they will pray to God to reward your Holiness.

After the original preserved in the archives of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

LETTER 100.

To a Priest.

He gives him some salutary advice.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

CIORANI, April 26, 1748.

I received your letter, and I read your reasons which convince me that by your resignation you would derive greater quiet, but not the greater glory of God and the greater profit of souls. You flee from one cross, but

you will find that you must carry another. I think that you should withdraw and make privately the spiritual exercises, in order that the Lord may help you to decide what will be for his greater glory. At this house at Ciorani the exercises will begin on the 27th of next May; hence if you wish to make them here, you are now informed of the time when they begin. I recommend myself to your prayers. Praised be Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Immaculate! I remain,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 101.

To a Father of the Society of Jesus.

Affection and veneration of the saint for the Society.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, May 31, 1748.

I received your much prized letter together with the pious and magnificent present. I have been much confused thereby, and with sentiments of confusion I thank you most cordially for it. As a sign of my gratitude and of the affection that I bear towards the Society of Jesus and towards every one of the Reverend Fathers, I beg you to accept a few small books of devotion, together with some pictures which we have had engraved. I also send you the *Pratica del confessore*[1] [Practice of the Confessor]

[1] The full title of the Italian work is: "Pratica del confessore per ben esercitare il suo ministero." — The large work of Moral Theology of which St. Alphonsus speaks had been published some months before under the title: "Medulla Theologiæ moralis R. P. Hermanii Busenbaum S. J. cum adnotationibus per R. P. D. Alphonsum de Ligorio ... adjunctis." (1 vol. in 4°.)

which I lately published, and which in substance is a compendium of the large work on Moral Theology which preceded it. I beg your Reverence to accept it in the right spirit.

News about the Society I have not yet received, because Father Centola scarcely left the box when he continued his journey, and I did not see him; but I shall meet him at Salerno on Friday. I am as anxious about this news as if it concerned our own Congregation, since there is question of an Order that has, one may say, sanctified and continues to sanctify the world. Above all do I thank you for the cordiality with which your Reverence writes to me; and I beg you therefore to recommend me most earnestly in your holy Mass to Jesus Christ, at least for three days. Humbly kissing your hand, I remain most respectfully...

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 102.

To the Bishop of Avellino and Frigenti, Mgr. Felice Leoni. [1]

Request for a favor relative to ordination.

May Jesus and Mary be our life!

CIORANI, August 25, 1748.

Your Lordship has had the kindness to promise the deacon Salvatore Gallo, your subject and a member of our Congregation, the favor of promoting him to the priesthood at the coming ordination in September. I send therefore a Father, the bearer of this, to receive the favorable rescript and also to render many thanks to your Lordship for the very great favor that has been conferred. Encouraged by such extreme kindness, I make bold to ask you to deign to grant to this our Congregation the favors which many

[1] Mgr. Felice Leoni, an Augustinian, was born at Giovenazzo, July 14, 1677; was consecrated bishop, September 26, 1735, and died in 1754.

bishops, and especially the Archbishops of Salerno and Conza, as also the Bishops of Bovino and Nocera (in whose dioceses our houses are situated) have bestowed on similar occasions when an ordination of our subjects was to take place, namely, to refer to the Rectors of the said houses, or to me who unworthily hold the office of Rector Major, the examination of these candidates. So particular a favor will be a special proof of the most courteous love and affection that you bear towards our Institute. It will be for me and for the whole Congregation a motive for placing ourselves under a lasting obligation to you, and will be an incentive to retain continually a memory of it in our poor prayers to the Almighty for the preservation and happiness of your Lordship, of whom I remain,

Your most humble and devoted servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour,
Rector Major.

After the original, the property of the Orlando family at Torre Annunziata.

LETTER 103.

To Cardinal Giuseppe Spinelli, Archbishop of Naples.

Notes written by the saint to the aforesaid Cardinal who was to draw up the report requested of him by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars for the approbation of the Institute.[1]

[September, 1748.]

It will be a matter of surprise when it is made known that after so many Orders, Congregations and Institutes have been

1 The Cardinal intrusted the examination of the Rule of the new Institute to his auditor the abbate Blaschi, and on the 11th of October he sent to the Sacred Congregation a report favorable to the approbation, using nearly the same words that the saint used in his notes.

founded in the Church, the approbation as well as the confirmation of this new Institute is asked of the Holy See; for some say that it would be better to dissolve or reform the old Institutes rather than institute new ones. But the surprise will cease when people understand the end and aim of the Institute and the blessings with which the Lord has favored it. Moreover, it must be remarked that all the Institutes established during several centuries have met with the same opposition. Thus were opposed the Theatines, the Jesuits, the so-called Congregation of the Mother of God, the Pious Workers. Nevertheless the Holy See inspired by the Holy Ghost did not hesitate to approve them, and experience has shown of what great profit each one of these new Institutes has been to the Church of God.

But all these Institutes, it is said, began with great fervor, and then became relaxed. This will be the case with the new Institute.

In answer to this we say that in many Institutes fervor has been and is maintained; and although it is not the same as that with which the first members began, yet it is such as has heretofore been of great advantage to God's Church, as well on account of the examples of regular observance as on account of the works that have been done for the good of their fellow-men.

Then it is said that it is impossible to expect human nature to change; according to the present condition of men they begin with great fervor, but afterwards they grow cold. The farther water is removed from its source, the less limpid and the more turbid it becomes. But we see that God, who loves his glory above all things, and certainly was the author of so many Institutes which have been founded, has thought it well to govern his Church in such a manner that from time to time new Institutes should be established, not only that the garment of his Spouse might be adorned with various colors, but that, should the fervor

of the ancient Institutes fail, it might be supplied by the fervor of new ones, which usually begin in this way. This fervor generally speaking endures for many centuries to the immense profit as well of the members of the Institute as of the people. If in a vineyard new plants are not substituted for the old ones, what will happen? The old ones dry up, and if new ones are wanting, the vineyard will come to an end.

But now, some say, so many Orders, so many Congregations have sprung up that finally they will become more than enough for the religious education of the people.

O would to God that these were enough! *Messis quidem multa!* [The harvest is great.] Whoever is somewhat familiar with the care of souls knows how scarce is the number of laborers who truly seek the salvation of souls, and he also knows how many souls are lost for want of spiritual aid. And it is certain for several reasons which any one may find by himself here, that this is the case especially in rural districts.

To this end so many zealous priests have sought to engage in giving missions, which if useful in cities are altogether necessary in country places; since in these latter there is for the most part a want of good priests who break to these unlettered people the divine Word, and give them the needful instructions. Besides, the missionaries are necessary in these rural places for the reason that there are few priests there, and these are natives of the country; hence many souls make sacrilegious confessions on account of the repugnance that they feel in confessing to one who knows them. It, therefore, happens that if these souls who have thus fallen into sin have not the convenience of a mission, so as to be able to manifest their consciences to strange priests, it may be said with moral certainty that they will continue to live in disgrace with God, and will surely be damned. Experience has proved that the greatest

benefits are derived by souls from the missions which, as has been seen, have sanctified the entire population.

But would to God that the fruits of the missions were lasting! There would not be seen this corruption of morals as is seen even after the missions, and few souls would be lost. But the misfortune is that after some time the people grow cold and return to a still worse state on account of the light that they received during the missions.

Now, it is the aim of our most humble Institute to make permanent the fruits that have been gathered on the missions. For this purpose it is required by its Rule that the houses be located in the centre of dioceses so that the poor people may not only visit them in order to be helped in their spiritual wants, but may be otherwise aided by instructions, novenas and other exercises which the Fathers give, now in one place, now in another of the dioceses in which they live; and thus the fruit that has been derived from the missions is seen to continue among the people.

Such aid is of the greatest consolation to the people, because when in the small country places there is a scarcity of confessors, and in many districts scarcely a parish priest, it happens that very many hardly ever receive the sacraments; or if they go to confession, many through shame and repugnance make sacrilegious confessions. Confessors who go about know what comfort this help is, and how much the people are thereby consoled.

And in order that the subjects of this Congregation may be entirely free from all the cares in which are usually involved those laborers that live in inhabited places, it has been established that their residence should be outside of inhabited places in order to attend better to the spiritual care of the country people.

This Congregation, therefore, performs a work that is for the benefit of the people in the country, which is performed by no other Congregation of missionaries; hence it is hoped

that the approbation and confirmation of it may be obtained.

The aim and purpose of the Institute is to form a Congregation, under the title of the Most Holy Saviour, of secular priests, living in common, subject to the jurisdiction of the Ordinaries of the places, *ad instar* [similar] to the Congregation of the Fathers of the Mission and of the Pious Workers, with this distinction, however, that its members are to live in the centre of the most needy dioceses, and outside of the inhabited places, in order that they may the better devote themselves to the abandoned people of the country, and be more prepared to offer them assistance by missions, instructions and the administration of the sacraments.

They observe moreover the following twelve rules.....

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After the original preserved in the archives of the house at Pagani.

LETTER 104.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce.

Obligation of a religious to sustain observance, especially in regard to the admission of novices.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, September 15, [1748].

I have just received your long letter. You have done well to maintain the observance of the monastery in regard to the first point as well as the second about which you have written to me. We must prefer the common good of the monastery to every private good; otherwise the monastery would become an abode of worldly-minded women, instead of being a sacred asylum of spouses of Jesus Christ. In this matter be firm, and do not yield.

Omit one of your ordinary Communions as a penance for

the weakness you have shown in the last case by giving your vote out of compassion. In future do not commit the same fault; otherwise I shall have to command you to abstain from Communion for a whole month without speaking of the scruple of which you would have to purify your conscience by confession. Certainly, we should be very scrupulous in admitting to the monastery a person who has not given signs that she has really entered it in order to serve God. In this manner the convents are ruined through the fault of those that give their votes through human respect. In future, therefore, be firm, and encourage your companions to show the same firmness; they will thereby acquire great merit with Jesus Christ; above all, if on this account they have to suffer persecution: *Beati qui persecutionem patiuntur propter justitiam.* [Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake. — *Matt.* v. 10.] Always act thus, enduring persecutions with joy, without being disturbed; and answer that you act thus not out of passion, but because you think that you should commit a sin if you acted otherwise; and say nothing more.

Recommend me to Jesus and to Mary. I am, etc. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Pray every day to the Blessed Virgin in behalf of our affairs; for just now the question of our approbation is before the authorities at Rome. This I enjoin upon you as a matter of obedience. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your Father and servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After the original in possession of Chevalier Felice Toraldo, son of the late Horace Toraldo, at Tropea.

LETTER 105.

To a Superior of his Congregation.

Two important regulations; one in regard to the health of the subjects, the other about the protection of their vocation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, December 26, [1748].

O my God! how dreadful was yesterday's weather for travelling! — I was at the altar; but you might have said one word to let me know that it was raining, and I would not have let you go. This inordinate eagerness for missions does not please me. When afterwards a subject becomes sick, the evil would be greater than if we had omitted giving ten missions.

Henceforward, for the rest of my life, I establish a general rule, that you shall read to all those that are with you, and which you shall afterwards communicate to the Rector of Caposele and to all the rest; for I recollect the great haste that was exhibited at the departure from Cirignola.[1]

I declare then that it is my express wish, which must not be interpreted, that no one, at least of the chorists, should

[1] This great haste on the journey from Cirignola to Santa Agata della Puglia was shown by Fathers Sportelli, Villani, Cafaro and six others, in the month of January, 1746. We subjoin the account given by Father Sportelli to Father Mazzini: "January 22, we set out in a heavy rain, which lasted the whole day, and so we reached Ascoli thoroughly drenched. A room was given to us containing two beds; there nine of us were obliged to find accommodations as best we could. When morning dawned, we set out for Ascoli, still thoroughly wet, and the day was so cold that our clothing froze upon our bodies. We were in great haste, for our Father had told us to begin the mission on Sunday the 23d; however, we found him at Santa Agata and learned that he had opened the mission on Saturday, 22, and had preached on Sunday. As his breast began to give him great trouble, I had to continue the mission."

ever set out in the rain, unless it be in summer time, or the journey be a short one, or when some extraordinary emergency arises. I mention these exceptions for the greater tranquillity of the Superiors. Hence I wish that no chorist shall ever set out on a journey in the rain, even though there were question of giving a mission at Paris. Preserve this letter so that you may remember this rule.

Another thing to which I intend never to give my consent is that permission be given to the Fathers or to the Brothers to visit their families because a relative is either sick or dying. This is permitted only when the father or the mother is seriously ill; and in this case I should be better satisfied if even then one did not go there. I also except any very extraordinary case, in regard to which I leave it to the Superiors to decide.

The first of these measures aims at preventing the health of the subjects from being endangered; the second, at preventing the loss of vocation and of the salvation of the soul.

Also in respect to any other case than sickness, I leave it to the Superiors to examine whether the case is extraordinary, or whether there is question about the wants or the affairs of the Congregation.

I send you again twenty *carlini*[1] to help you. After the mission of St. Michael send Father Criscuoli to this place. Live Jesus and Mary!

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Saviour.

After an old copy.

[1] Twenty *carlini* are equal to 8 fr. 50 centimes; a *carlino*, being equal to 7 cents of our money.

LETTER 106.

To Signor D. Pompeo Scibelli, at Leoni.

He asks him to do him a service.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, February 15, 1749.

My dear Don Pompeo: Please have the enclosed letters forwarded to their destination.

As to the young man,[1] I have already written that, since the Bishop [di S. Angelo de' Lombardi] does not wish to register his patrimonial title in the episcopal chancery before his ordination, you may send him to us. But as I have said, you should at least examine his patrimony and his papers, so that I may be assured that there is no mistake in regard to this matter. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your Reverence already knows that we have received the Pontifical approbation;[2] thank Jesus Christ for us. Live Jesus!

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

[1] This young man was D. Giovanni Tommaso Nittoli, of the village of Leoni. Admitted into the novitiate, April 6, 1749, he made his profession, March 28, 1750, and after a holy life died on Holy Thursday, in 1785. Many favors are said to have been obtained through his intercession.

[2] It was on January 28, 1749, that Father Villani who was at Rome informed the saint of the Pontifical approbation of the Congregation, which was thenceforth called *Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.* The Brief of approbation: *Ad Pastoralis dignitatis fastigium* was promulgated February 25.

LETTER 107.

To D. Giuseppe Muscari, Prior of the Monastery of St. Basil at Rome.

Various communications relative to the affair of the approbation and of privileges.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, March 20, 1749.

Last evening I received your very kind favor in which you inform me that Father Villani set out for Loreto[1] on the 7th; by this time I think he has already reached the place. In regard to the faculties of the Penitentiary, I have written to him several times that he should use greater despatch so that the whole Congregation may receive them. How astonishing! By the grace of Jesus Christ we have received the approbation; a favor so immense that I can hardly believe that it is so; and then a matter that is as easy as the obtaining for the missions the faculties which are possessed by so many Congregations, the Congregation of the priests of the archdiocese, the Congregation of S. Pietro at Cesarano, which are few and not approved; — these faculties I say which I believed could certainly be obtained, we should not be able to obtain!

As for the attestation, Don Andrea did not write to me that he wished the attestation of the Ordinary; he told me that the attestation was necessary, or that I might give him leave to speak. And I have sent it to him.

Now from your letter I learn that the attestation of the Ordinary is required; I have, therefore, written to Salerno, and when the attestation arrives, I will send it to your Reverence, or to another whom you may mention; because

[1] After receiving the Pontifical approbation Father Villani and Brother Francesco Tartaglione made a pilgrimage to Loreto to thank our Blessed Lady.

after Father Villani has come from Loreto, it seems to me that he will be able to return to the kingdom, so long as he has not on his hands any other important matter about the settlement of which I shall look to him.

I have also written, and I do so again, that he should not fail to procure for us the favor of the privileged altar. As to other privileges, there is no more need of speaking of them at present. It is certain that it has been an important matter to obtain the approbation for which, as we know, your Reverence has done so much. May God reward you for what you have done; and for which I give you a thousand thanks. As for that affair, [1] we shall not omit to pray to the Blessed Virgin. I also thank you for the trouble, which you took in superintending the printing of the Rule.[2] As I have already decided and written to Father Villani in my last letters, this Rule I shall have carefully printed at Naples in small form. If Father Villani should be obliged to defer his return among us, you might send one of the Briefs with the Rule.

I do not now write to-day a special letter to Father Villani, because your Reverence may allow him to see this letter; and as for other things he will find them written in my other letters that I have sent by post.

Tell him that I have received ten ducats from P. D. Lorenzo d' Antonio for that transaction of which he knows; if he wishes me to send them by a bill of exchange, I shall do so.

In regard to the Office of the Most Holy Redeemer [3] there is question, I hope, of the Office with the octave. But

[1] This affair was the proposition of Father Muscari to enter the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[2] Father Muscari had been charged to attend to the printing of the Rule, approved by the Holy See.

[3] The Congregation by the change of its name obtained the favor of reciting the Office of the Most Holy Redeemer, such as was already recited at Venice.

I do not see what would have to be suppressed and what would be proper for Venice; for we have examined it, and it contains nothing that might not suit for all places. For the rest I shall acquiesce in what is right.

Recommend me to Jesus and Mary, as we all do not fail to do for you. May Mary the Most Blessed Virgin obtain for us this favor. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa! I bless the journey made by Father Andrea and Brother Francesco to Loreto; I bless their journey home. Tell Father Villani that when he arrives at Naples he should go to the house of Don Giovanni Olivieri; he lives in the street of the Monastery of the Madonna, a little beyond the convent, opposite to the parlor, at the portico that is always closed. There he will find a letter from me, which will tell him what he has to do at Naples before returning here, that is, he is to make a visit to Marquis Brancone and to the Grand Almoner. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble and devoted servant,

ALFONSO,

of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the oratory of the Archconfraternity of our Lady of Mercy and of St. Alfonso de Liguori, at Naples.

LETTER 108.

To the Same.

He accepts his religious profession.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I the undersigned, Rector Major of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, accept the oblation and the oath, made by the Very Reverend Father Abbate Don Giuseppe Muscari, of the Order of St. Basil, of persevering in our Congregation by virtue of the permission obtained

by him from His Holiness our reigning Pontiff Benedict XIV., so that he may pass from his Order to the said Congregation. And by the power that I possess, as Rector Major of said Congregation, I dispense the same from the year's novitiate, and I now receive him as a member[1] of our house of St. Michael at Nocera di Pagani this (*the date is wanting*).

DON ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer,
Rector Major.

After the original in possession of Abbé Depotter, professor at St. Omer, France.

LETTER 109.

To the Same.

He charges him with a commission.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, May 28, [1749].

I have already written to you in another letter about Father Bianchi's work against Giannone.[2] You willl find Brother Francesco opposite the church of the Annunziata of Aversa.[3] But if perchance you do not find him, as you

[1] In consequence of this acceptance Father Muscari made his profession at Rome, June 1, 1749, in the church of the Most Holy Trinity, in the presence of two notaries. Cardinal Domenico Orsini, representing on this occasion the person of St. Alphonsus, received by proxy the vows of the newly professed.

[2] This work of Father Giovanni Antonio Bianchi of the Minor Conventuals of St. Francis, was published at Rome (1745 — 1751) under the title: "Della potestà e polizia della Chiesa, trattati due contro le nuove opinioni di Pietro Giannone." (Of the power and government of the Church, in two treatises directed against the new opinions of Pietro Giannone.)

[3] As Father Muscari was to pass through Naples to go first to S. Eufemia, his native place, and then to Ciorani, he was to take the aforesaid work to Brother Francesco, who then lived at Naples in a house belonging to the Congregation.

will perhaps travel at night, leave the book with the priest Don Francesco Romano, confessor of the Annunziata of that city, and tell him that Brother Francesco Tartaglione will call for it, and that he should not give it to any one else.

Remember that we are ardently looking for you. I embrace Don Giuseppe Rosa.[1] I hope that now by your religious profession you are entirely ours. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved at Cotrone in possession of Canon Filippo Messina, Prothonotary apostolic.

LETTER 110.

To Father Francesco Margotta, Rector of the House at Caposele.

The saint expresses his regard for the Archbishop of Conza. — Various affairs.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CARIFI, November 13, [1749.]

I received the letter of Brother Gennaro [Rendina] containing the news. I am happy to hear of the success of the mission. *Gloria Patri!*

What is to be done about the mission of Caposele? Have patience; give the mission in order to please Monsignor, whose hand you will please kiss for me. Let Fathers Villani and Cafaro remain to give the mission;

[1] Don Giuseppe de Rosa, a native of Nocera de' Pagani, was at that time studying theology at Rome; and as he was under the direction of Father Muscari, also conceived the desire of entering the new Congregation. St. Alphonsus received him, but the young priest remained only a few months in the novitiate. In 1775 he became Bishop of Policastro.

afterwards they are to set out for this place. It will be necessary to send Father Robertis to Sieti, where a mission is to be opened next Sunday the 15th; otherwise, I will have to leave the place; for God knows what complaints his sisters would make.[1]

Here is Father Villani writing me for another mission to be given at Conza. What is to be done in the end? If Monsignor really desires the same for Conza as for Caposele, I shall be well satisfied. Tell him that I cannot say no to his wishes. I had already marked out a great number of missions; but on account of the great love we have for him I will postpone them.

We shall give here the exercises to the candidates for ordination. It is necessary for you to go to the mission of Sarno, which is to begin the day after Christmas.

Let Fathers Villani and Cafaro go to Conza and Caposele; if you need the assistance of another Father, let me know immediately. But if you can do without him, so much the better. In this case, let me know this in time.

I am delighted to hear about [Fr. Don Gerardo] Grassi; let him write to me immediately. Please see whether [Fr. Pasquale] Amendolara cannot receive subdeaconship. Tell Monsignor that I take the ordination upon my conscience; meanwhile I am making Amendolara study diligently, and am very watchful. Let him be without fear; if this subject were not capable, I myself would feel a scruple in thus advancing him.

I am giving a little mission at Carifi; I shall have to leave the place Saturday, for I have to set out for Cava where a novena is to be held in honor of Our Lady of the Elm; the picture is to be exposed in order to stop the ravages of the pest prevalent among the cattle at present.

[1] Father Robertis was a native of Sieti, where his sisters were living at the time.

I have just received an excellent priest of Ischia;[1] he is a good confessor, a good preacher and an excellent scholar. He is about forty years of age; he will be a good subject, for he has the reputation of a saint. He has left us to settle his domestic affairs; he will return within a month. Two others have come from Ischia; one of them is in his twenty-fourth year. I have not even examined them, for they seem to me to be in poor health. Later on we shall see. I embrace and bless all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very affectionate Father and confrère,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the parish church of Curti Giffoni, in the diocese of Salerno.

LETTER III.

To the Same.

He congratulates Father Margotta on the success of certain apostolic labors.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CAVA, November 19, [1749].

I am here at Cava, crippled though I am, giving a novena in honor of our Lady to implore the cessation of the plague. The place is crowded and I shall likely remain eight days longer to give the exercises to the monastery of S. Giovanni.

I received from the archbishop a most courteous letter, which I shall answer. *Gloria Patri* for your success, for the good will of Monsignor, for the hundred ducats, for Grassi, for Amendolara, and for everything else.[2] *Digitus Dei est hic.* [The finger of God is here.] Father

[1] Father D. Francesco Buonomano.

[2] On seeing the good effected by the missions, Mgr. Giuseppe

Villani writes to me that Monsignor has given the faculties for all the Fathers that go to Caposele; but he does not say for what purpose they are given. I allow you to give those missions up to Christmas; for the day after the feast the mission of Sarno must be given.

I have settled matters with Father Garzilli; I expect him to go to Foggia to have an interview with Fazzioli. If Fazzioli wishes us to take the schools, we must answer that it is impossible.

As for [Don Gerardo] Grassi, let us wait for the Brief; as for Amendolara, let us wait till Lent.

I am expecting the young candidate from Calitri.

As for the others, tell them I will not receive them without the consent of the archbishop; hence after testing their vocation, let them obtain his consent.

Affairs are going on well at Nocera.

With regard to the mission of Melfi, I understand that [Vincenzo] Mannarini's subjects[1] are to give it. Write me what you know about this affair. I embrace and bless you all in Jesus and Mary. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in our convent at Leoben, diocese of Seckau, in Austria.

Nicolai became more and more a friend of the Institute of St. Alphonsus; and although he had already given large subsidies for beginning the foundation of the convent at Caposele, he yet gave this year one hundred ducats more for the enlargement of the house, and he kindly consented to ordain Gerardo Grassi and Pasquale Amendolara, both natives of the diocese of Conza.

1 The Fathers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Sacrament.

LETTER 112.

To the Same.

He gives Father Margotta various orders with regard to the sale of his books; he speaks of the reception of novices and of the new building at Caposele.

[End of January, 1750.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I was under the impression that the books[1] had been delivered at Conza two months ago, and now I hear that not a single book has been sent thither; hence it is necessary for you to send them immediately together with the other works that were asked for; write at the same time to the archpriests to tell them that they can obtain a copy of my book at the price of a certain number of Masses; the moment is favorable; for in a short time I shall have no more Masses. Have patience; be kind enough to do me this favor.

Now, as for the young men, speak frankly to them; tell them that the Consultors here wish to examine them and more rigorously than heretofore; if they do not stand the examination, they have to return whence they came. In the case of that boy who has not attained the required age, I am satisfied [here a few words are missing] with the ten ducats which will be better for him to leave here. The other young man, the notary's son, can also come. It is necessary that they have their patrimony accepted and registered at the episcopal chancery; otherwise what happened to de Angelis,[2] may also happen to them; difficulties now arise about his patrimony, and he cannot make his profession.

[1] The books here mentioned were copies of the saint's Moral Theology, which priests might receive by saying some Masses to the intention of the saint.

[2] D. Nicodemo de Angelis of the diocese of Benevento.

To please Monsignor, tell him I will send the Fathers to give the mission at Auletta,[1] the first week of Lent; they will, I think, set out on Wednesday from Salerno in a coach which goes to these suburban places, to Selvitella, or Buccino, or Auletta. Six Fathers will be sufficient. As it will be necessary for me to send Fathers from this place, I shall send Fathers de Robertis, Scibelli and Giovenale.

Oh, what difficulties surround me! Mgr. di S. Angelo wishes Father Cafaro to give the exercises to his clergy; and Mgr. di Nocera would like to have two missions during Lent. May the Madonna come to our assistance! Spiritual exercises at Ciorani and spiritual exercises at Iliceto! The Fathers are nearly exhausted.

If you should have no means of communicating with the nephew of the archpriest of Muro, have patience! Poor young man! I pity him sincerely. He wrote me a letter expressing his ardent desire to come to us. I am told that he is an angel, and moreover a very bright and able youth; but his parents are opposed to the step he wishes to take. Well, see whether we cannot help him in some way.

We are expecting Don Benedetto;[2] we are praying for him.

Your Reverence will please see that the building be completed for this summer, so that it may be occupied in September; and for this purpose I beg you to purchase sufficient lumber and all the required material. Lime you have already. Do not forget what I say. It appears to me that a thousand years are yet to pass before I shall see the house ready and the exercises given. When I visit you after leaving Melfi, I hope I shall find everything in good order.

I am somewhat troubled about the Masses that are in

[1] Auletta, in the diocese of Conza.

[2] D. Benedetto Grazioli, a great friend and benefactor of the Congregation.

arrears. I beg you to settle the matter quickly with the priests of Caposele, Calitri, Teora, or elsewhere. Tell them to say a hundred or at least sixty-two Masses according to my intention, during the month of February. Please do me this favor to relieve me of my scruples; let me know how you have settled the matter.

If you receive their promise to say the Masses during the whole month of February for the eight or nine books, you need not trouble yourself about the other matter.

Ask permission of the archbishop to give the mission at Melfi; I wish to have you with me on that mission which I shall open the Sunday after Easter. Do not forget poor Amendolara.[1] I embrace and bless you. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Send me the books immediately, and let me know. I have already made the intentions with regard to the books marked below. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very affectionate Father,

ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer,
Rector Major.

From the original in possession of Canon Francesco Saverio Martini, Vicar-General of Alatri.

LETTER 113.
To the Same.

He tells him to remain more at home, and to moderate his mortifications. — Details relative to novices.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

[CIORANI], January 23, 1750.

I have received the last letter that you wrote me from Atella.[2] I have felt some displeasure in hearing that you

[1] Pasquale Amendolara was a young student for whom Father Margotta was to obtain a letter dimissory from the archbishop.

[2] Father Margotta was giving a mission at Atella, a town in the diocese of Melfi.

are still in this place. A sojourn so prolonged outside of the house annoys me. Remember that you are now Rector. In future, endeavor to keep yourself free from similar embarrassments. I have already answered the Bishop [of Melfi] that in regard to the exercises to be given at Melfi, such a thing is not possible at present. When the Rector is absent from home all things go wrong. Resolve in future to stay at home as much as possible except when one or the other mission is to be given, or there is some real necessity.

I imagine that on his part the Archbishop [di Conza] is complaining that I am sending you hither and thither. This would be very disagreeable to me if it were the case.

I hear besides that your health is shattered. For mercy's sake, take care of it; retrench all those mortifications in eating, etc. — Now it will be better for you to practise obedience.

You have embarrassed me by that other mission at Auletta. The Fathers are exhausted. In short, on the return of Father N. for Lent, we shall speak to him about it, and make arrangements. In future dispose things in such a way that you may avoid giving missions in Lent.

Father Villani has written to you about Frater Amendolara; I also recommend him to you myself. Make out the memorial as regards the requisite qualifications, and endeavor to spare him a journey for the examination. Assure the archbishop on my conscience that he is a capable subject. I have always directed his studies; he is capable of being not only subdeacon but priest.

I also recommend to you to write to N. — You undoubtedly know that he wished to return, and was only awaiting my consent. I have written to him to come to me, since his conscience was at rest in regard to the wants of his family; but I have not as yet seen him. Perhaps

my letter may not have reached him; write him again the same thing in my name.

O what a trouble to me is the mission that is to be given at Auletta; so much expense, and so much fatigue for the Fathers at this time, and with such roads! why? for the sake of a mission. Think at all events of the means of conveyance, since at least six missionaries will be needed.

The son of N. has again been examined, and in the same way has been found incompetent; besides to judge him by what he says, I should think that he has no vocation. He has also not yet reached the proper age, and his father is inclined to do but little for him; this would be at least a pretext for dismissing him.

As for the other young man,[1] I adhere to what I have written you. Let his uncle at least contribute as soon as possible the twenty ducats that he has promised. This is little enough for one year and so many months during which he is to stay with us before entering the novitiate; but we must try to obtain at least this sum.

As to the two young men of N. and of N.,[2] I have already written to you about them. N. may come; for as he is obliged to escape secretly, we cannot, at least for the present, exact the twenty-five ducats. In regard to the young man of N. he may also come; he is capable; since after having examined him, Father N. and the archpriest, who is his uncle, I believe, tell me that they are satisfied with him, and that his affairs are in a good condition. See to it, therefore, that his patrimony be settled, that we be assured of the twenty-five ducats, and then let him come.

Gloria Patri! There is such a concourse of young men that we can scarcely receive them all; provided however, they be good, I shall not lose confidence.

1 This other young man was Donato Mellacio, who had not yet attained the proper age to enter the novitiate.

2 These two others were Vito Polestra and Domenico Blasucci.

For mercy's sake go to bed in the evening immediately after the ringing of the bell; I have been told that you sometimes sleep on the floor. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

From the Roman edition.

LETTER 114.

To the Same.

Grave exhortations. — Duties of a Rector. — Necessity of dying to one's self.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, February 1, [1750].

I beg you to read this letter with attention and to preserve it, because in future it may be of service to you.

Before all, to speak freely to you, I say that I do not think that you would wish to be treated with delicacy and consideration in reference to matters concerning obedience, as if you were a weak subject and a man of no good will. This, between you and me, is the case with some members of the Congregation. I have a different idea of your Reverence; for I am convinced that you wish what is most perfect and agreeable to God.

Let us now come to the point. You know that I have always esteemed you and that I still esteem you; facts have proved this. I should regret if any one would recall vividly to my mind what has already been told to me, namely, that you are a saint, but that you are not fit to be Rector, perhaps for the following reasons: That as Superior you are but little at home; there is wanting the necessary order in all that regards the house and regular observance; that your Reverence takes upon yourself the care of a multitude of useless things, *piglia tante gatte a pettinare*, [1] — so many letters, so much correspondence, so many

[1] Literally: comb so many cats!

unsuitable occupations, etc., especially, however, so many devotions to which you appear to be attached, to the detriment of regular observance.

We are all convinced that you do not go out, that you do nothing unless it be for God; but, *ne quid nimis* [not anything too much]. Now that you are in the Congregation, above all as Superior, you should think that the greatest glory that can be given to God is, that you watch over the maintenance of observance and the good of this house, which is one of the best, and even, I may say so, the best that we have. It is true, as at present your number is small the order of the day, etc. cannot be entirely kept; but why not adhere to it when it can be done conveniently? Hence in regard to sleep, be kind enough to listen to me. I beg you to go to bed at the time fixed by the Rule, at least for the night. All that I permit you is the half hour that I have granted you; nothing more. After that, if you have to attend to some necessary affair, you may do so in the morning by omitting prayer at the time of rising, and you may act thus only in some other very rare case that may present itself at the most once or twice a year. But this half hour you must measure by your hour-glass, so that you must be in bed as soon as the half hour has elapsed; and this is to be understood only when you are at home; for when you are on missions, charity towards your companions requires that you should go to bed when the others do.

As for going out, you have already noticed that when the head is wanting everything gets out of order. I do not however forbid you to go out when there is question of some affair that concerns the house or the Congregation, or the glory of God in a matter of importance; but if for the glory of God you wished to avail yourself of every occasion that presents itself to you every day, in every part of this diocese, you would not be able to be at home for a

moment. The greatest glory of God and the will of God require, I repeat, that you watch over the interests of the house, of the church *Mater Domini*, and of regular observance, so that there may not be verified in you what others have suspected.

I write to you with all affection, because I esteem you and esteem you much; I have a high idea of your merit, and I hope that you will be one of those who in the Congregation wish to sanctify themselves like Fathers Cafaro, Villani, Mazzini, Fiocchi, Ferrara, etc., who are dead to their own will, and you would not wish to resemble certain others whom I must treat with great consideration. I will treat them in this manner; but I see that they will not become saints like those whom the Superiors can, according to my usual expression, cut to pieces. You see that I speak to you with sincerity and for your advancement. Why have you given yourself to God with all that you possess? In order to sanctify yourself. What misfortune would it then be for you if now you should not attain this object! God has wished and wishes, as you see, great things of you; but what he chiefly desires is, that *you should be dead to your own will and to your own gratification.* You know better than I that this is the essential point, and merely by entering the Congregation, you have made a sacrifice of your will; beware lest you take back the least part of it; for this would surely hinder you from attaining sanctity. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 115.

To the Same.

Joy at seeing him humble and resigned. — Different details.

CIORANI, February 7, [1750].

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your letter, so expressive of humility and of resignation, afforded me the greatest consolation. I expected this, and for this reason I took that liberty with you. You know now how I esteem and love you.

I agree with your Reverence with regard to the young men of Morra; it will be very difficult to induce the bishop to accept the patrimonies presented; he may give the same answer that he gave in the case of Niccolò. Now, as soon as the patrimonies are settled and signed before law, you may send the two young men, but with the understanding that they are to undergo an examination.

Try to send Don Paolino [Scibelli], as I told you in my last letter. I shall be satisfied if he arrives at the beginning of the mission. I am also asking Don Angelo[1] to render some assistance.

If [Don Pasquale] Amendolara does not go to the archbishop in person, he will not be able to effect anything.

I know the debts contracted in the building of the new house.[2] But remember that the archbishop after giving one hundred ducats of his own money and contributions from other priests, wishes to see the building erected. Act with your usual prudence, and do all that you can to have those

[1] Don Angelo Latessa, a secular priest at this time, afterwards entered the Congregation.

[2] The building of the house at Caposele.

rooms that were lately planned, finished as quickly as possible. That arrangement about the books in return for the Masses is working admirably, as you wrote to me; however, I ask your Reverence to see whether others who have not taken the obligation upon themselves, are saying the Masses.

Only ten requests for books, as I wrote to you, were sent in from the diocese. Now do not send more than this number, and do not send away any in future without letting me know, and then I shall write to you. It is true that I have certain other Masses; but still I wish first to be informed. For these ten copies they will have to say Masses during the month of May. I have already made the intentions; you may give the Masses to whomsoever you wish; with regard to other books please write to me first. As for those ten copies destined for the diocese, I wished to say that if now you can dispose of eight or nine of them for Mass-intentions, it will not be any longer necessary for me to procure an exchange of intentions. But this is with the understanding that the Masses in payment of these eight or nine books be celebrated during the month of February; for if they should be said during the month of May, it would be necessary for you to obtain for me an exchange of intentions, and I should repay you in May.

It will not be necessary to have one hundred Masses said on a loan; seventy-two will be sufficient. Mind well, seventy-two are sufficient. Remember this, *no more*, otherwise I shall find myself in trouble. Please then tell me when, and on what day you give or have given the aforesaid books, either to persons in the diocese, or in any other place where you can also give them if you wish.

I have already received the twenty *carlini* together with a list of twenty Masses from Brother Gennaro [Rendina].

I embrace and bless you all; salute for me Don Angelo [Latessa].

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very affectionate confrère,

ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of Father William Lœwekamp, C. SS. R.

LETTER 116.

To Father Cesare Sportelli, at Pagani.

He rejoices to hear that he is in better health,

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, March 11, [1750].

I feel sorry about Father Tannoia, and I am glad that your Reverence is better, and that I have before me your letter. In regard to the saying of Mass, you must be obedient to the doctors. Here the news was received that you were worse, and we have therefore begun a novena to the Blessed Virgin for your Reverence.[1]

Tell Father Rector [Don Carmine Fiocchi] that this morning, at a late hour, the Fathers will go to Santa Maria Maggiore.[2]

Propose to the doctors whether it would not be better to send as soon as possible Father Tannoia to Iliceto to inhale the air of Puglia.

On Monday when Angelillo returns let him bring me all our books on Moral Theology, namely, those of Busembaum that are there. I have to send them elsewhere. Those books only need remain that are in plain binding. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa! I embrace and bless you all.

[1] Father Sportelli died shortly after, namely, April 19.

[2] S. Maria Maggiore, a hamlet of Nocera.

Send to me Angelillo every Monday, and on Sundays and Wednesdays as soon as the carrier from Nocera brings the manuscripts. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your very affectionate confrère,

ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of Signor Vincenzo Tramontano at Pagani.

LETTER 117.

To Father Francesco Margotta and to his Consultors.

J. M. J.

Orders left after the canonical Visitation made in the house of *Mater Domini* in Caposele, May 16, 1750.

The present state of this house for want of a dwelling suitable for our Institute induces us to urge upon the Superior the necessity of making some improvements in it, so that regular observance may be established.

We further ordain that a door should be made from the church leading to the well, as also that a lock should be put on the door of the sacristy, and finally, that there should be appointed a secular procurator who is to collect what is due to the house.

This is what we have thought well to ordain for the present Visitation, confiding for the rest in the prudence, piety, zeal, and rare qualities of the Superior of this house, which are well known to us.

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI, *R. M.*,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

GIOVANNI MAZZINI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer,
Co-Visitor and *Vice-Secretary.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 118.

To Canon D. Giacomo Fontana, at Naples.

He sends him his book "The Glories of Mary."

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, October 12, [1750].

I send you my work on the Madonna. This poor book has met with many contradictions;[1] it was finally published after many difficulties, and a labor of many years employed in condensing what it contains.

I have been suffering from a catarrh of the chest, but at present I am better. We shall see each other at Naples, shortly. In the mean time recommend me to the Madonna, and believe me,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] I send you two copies of the work. One is for you, the other is destined for Don Matteo Testa[2] who, I am happy to hear, is better; be kind enough to send it to him. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I have already sent two copies to Signor D. Giacomo Martorelli.[3] He will have received them by this time, I hope; if not, he will receive them soon. Live Jesus and Mary!

After an old copy.

[1] St. Alphonsus, who could never be satisfied with the Neapolitan examiners charged with the revision of books, no doubt refers here to certain difficulties which were raised against "The Glories of Mary." The teachings followed at Naples were generally very severe, and the holy Doctor had more than one discussion with the censors, as one may gather from his letters.

[2] Matteo Testa, a celebrated missionary who became later on Grand Almoner and died as Archbishop of Reggio.

[3] A Neapolitan priest, the author of several learned works.

LETTER 119.

To a Gentleman of Vitolano.[1]

Arrangement about a mission.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NAPLES, November 7, 1750.

I received your second most esteemed favor here at Naples where I am engaged in giving a mission at the church of *Spiritu Santo*. I have already answered Signor [*name illegible*], and the mission has already been arranged. I cannot go myself, but my companions will serve you and the gentlemen of Vitolano to whom I have also written. After the mission at Gesualdo,[2] they will go to Montefalcione, and from Montefalcione[3] they will send word to those gentlemen of the day of their arrival. So I have written to my companions and they have written to me that they would act accordingly. Everything is now arranged [*some words illegible*]. Live Jesus, Mary!

Your very devoted and very affectionate servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After a copy.

1 Vitolano, a town in the diocese of Benevento.
2 Gesualdo, a town in the diocese of Frigento.
3 Montefalcione, a town in the diocese of Benevento.

LETTER 120.

To Sister Maria di Gesù, a Carmelite, Prioress of the Monastery at Ripacandida.[1]

Answer to a difficulty in regard to holy Communion.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, December 30, [1750].

I answer your letter briefly. As for continuing to be guided as you were before according to the advice of your old director, I not only think this to be good, but it is even necessary; otherwise you could not know with certainty the will of God.

In regard to the union with God which your soul experiences after Communion, you should be without fear; you do not commit an act of idolatry; for it would be idolatry if you adored yourself.[2] It is an effect proper to

[1] St. Alphonsus, after the mission given at Melfi in the month of April, 1750, went to preach a mission at Ripacandida where, says Tannoia, he did not omit to pay a visit to the Carmelite nuns, and he was greatly edified by their fervor. — Their monastery had been founded October 15, 1735, by the archpriest Giambattista Rossi, who died in the odor of sanctity in the month of November, 1746.

Sister Maria di Gesù was the niece of this archpriest and of the archpriest of Contursi, the author of the Life of Mgr. Cavalieri, uncle of St. Alphonsus. How much our saint esteemed this nun, appears from the many letters addressed to her.

[2] The Sister had written to him as follows: "Wishing to adore (Jesus Christ himself) in himself, and not himself in myself, who am infinite baseness, I cannot succeed. What causes me most pain, my Father, is that having reached the greatest depth of my hell, I nevertheless feel myself, notwithstanding my immense miseries, united with this good Master, and in the closest manner. I am afflicted to see him so profoundly abased in me; but when I wish to break this union, to leave him himself in himself and myself in myself, I feel myself dying, and it seems that my soul must separate itself from my body; for our Lord does not wish to consent to this, and he continues to hold me in the close union of which I have

this sacrament to transform the soul into Jesus Christ so that the soul may say with St. Paul: *Vivo ego, jam non ego, sed Christus in me.* [I live now not I, but Christ liveth in me.] Endeavor therefore to check yourself so as to allow nothing to appear in the presence of your Sisters; but for the rest, abandon yourself to God, and do not put any obstacles in the way of the divine operations. All that you have then to do is, to annihilate yourself before God, and to offer yourself to him without reserve to the end that he may dispose of you according to his will.

I am pleased with what you tell me about the newly professed, and especially about the daughters of Don Benedetto:[1] let them pray for me to Jesus, their divine Spouse. Now tell me what I can do at the bishop's to be useful to you and to oblige the Community which is so dear to me. You are all of you in my eyes more than my own sisters; for I know that you love Jesus Christ, my Master. Recommend me without ceasing to Jesus Christ — me and the Congregation, and let the Sisters do the same. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

spoken. What happens to me in Communion, happens to me also in prayer; night and day, continually, at every moment, I find myself in this state, in which, however, I preserve my liberty. Be so good my Father, to give me advice, and tell me whether I am not an idolatress of myself. Dissipate my fears; you well understand in what an abasement I find myself; help me for the love of the Most Blessed Virgin and of my mother St. Teresa, whom you love; for I know that you love her. Finally I beg you to forgive me if I have written too much. . ."

1 These new Spouses were two daughters of D. Benedetto Grazioli of Atella, a very pious and rich man who bestowed abundant gifts upon the Institute of St. Alphonsus.

LETTER 121.

To Canon Giacomo Fontana, Rector of the Urban Seminary of Naples.[1]

He asks him for information in regard to the studies at the seminary.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, January 28, 1751.

My dear Canon: Be so kind as to tell me in a few words what rule is followed in the seminary in regard to the study of theology. I should like to know how much time is devoted in the morning to study in the rooms, and how long the class lasts. What is done after dinner? When do the theses, conferences, repetitions take place? What is the occupation in the evening?

I should like to know, moreover, whether during their course of theology, the students also follow another course either of the study of languages or of another science. Please furnish me with these details and recommend me to Jesus Christ. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Believe me, my dear Canon,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

[1] There were at Naples two seminaries: one destined properly speaking for the Neapolitans; this was called the *urban* seminary; the other destined for the Neapolitans of the diocese of Naples; this was called the *diocesan* seminary. — (Sparano, *Historical Memoires*).

LETTER 122.

To Father Francesco Margotta, Rector of the House at Caposele.

He complains of a lay-brother and of Father Margotta himself.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, March 7, [1751].

I hear in regard to Brother N. that by his bad conduct he renders himself disagreeable, not only to the Community, but to strangers, especially by his disrespectful way of speaking to the Fathers, by his rudeness and his stinginess. I draw your attention to this last point: for pity's sake, if the food given by the Community is simple and frugal let the Fathers and the Brothers at least not suffer in this respect. What good does it do to build within and to demolish without? If any one loses his vocation through our fault, we shall make ourselves accountable to God. It will be necessary that I withdraw this Brother from your house and send him to Ciorani to be the assistant of the cook. Give him a severe reprimand, and tell him if he becomes incorrigible and does not conduct himself as a lay-brother should, I shall be obliged, notwithstanding the interest that I take in him, to expel him from the Congregation. After what has happened in Father N's case I am resolved to be no longer indulgent. For him that does not wish to live in the Congregation as he should, the door is open; I do not wish to lose my soul for the sake of any one. I beg you to tell him all this word for word.

As to what your Reverence writes to me, namely, that *I should not give you any command, because it would place you in an embarrassing position and make you run risks*,— I must say to you, my dear Francesco, that I give you no command, but such language is displeasing to me. Consider,

my dear Francesco, that in this way you will surely never sanctify yourself, and if you wish to live in the Congregation in such a manner that the Superior may not give you any command for fear of *embarrassing or making you run risks* — grave words which your understanding did not dictate and which have caused me singular pain — your interior trials[1] will always increase; for then you take back your will which you have given to God; then the Lord will leave you to be a prey to your own troubles of conscience, and I know not what will then become of your eternal salvation. I beg you to reflect on this before the crucifix, and to write to me in regard to this matter so as to remove my anxiety.

I moreover hear that you have perhaps changed your director by leaving Father Paul [Cafaro]. This I should very much regret; for if that is the case, I should think that you have left him without a good reason, simply because he does not enter into your views. It seems to me however that this is not the right way. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 123.

To a Nun of the Most Holy Redeemer, at Scala.

She should allow herself to be guided by obedience. — The way of desolation is the way of divine love.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, May 30. [1751?]

Gloria Patri! You say that you have been brief, and it is almost a memoir that you have sent me! Yes, to oblige you, I answer you, although my first letter should have sufficed; I answer you in order that you may become still

[1] Father Margotta was then a prey to great interior trials, as is shown in his correspondence with Father Cafaro, his director.

more tranquil, and before writing I recommended myself to the Blessed Virgin. I assure you that you are in the state of grace, and that God wishes to sanctify you by means of these tribulations. You should not desire that the Lord should conduct you by an easier way; allow yourself to be guided as it pleases him. I see with satisfaction that you often invoke God and Mary; but I desire that you should ask him for the grace of always doing the divine will, by always offering yourself to God and by praying to him that he should treat you as he pleases. You pray for consolation, and such a prayer will help you but little, because there is too much self-love in it. Ask our Lord for the grace of loving him; but it does not matter whether he makes known to you that you love him. You write to me that you have confidence in what I may enjoin by obedience. But upon whom, think you, should I enjoin anything by obedience? Upon God? I cannot give any command to God; and if I could, I would not do so, because the road on which he conducts you is the best road for your salvation, and I clearly see that God is thus surely conducting you to his love. If you wish that I should give to the devil the order that you desire, I must declare to you that I do not wish to have anything to do with that beast. I therefore give you the order if you have confidence in me; for if you have no confidence in me, of what use is it to lose your time in writing to me and to make me lose my time in answering you?

Hence I tell you in the name of God, and repeat what I have said, that you are in the state of grace, and that he certainly wishes to lead you to sanctity on the road on which he keeps you. If you depart from this road to withdraw yourself from the sufferings and tediousness that you experience, I do not know what will become of your eternal salvation. Continue to move onward as you are doing; offer to God all this anguish; pray to him that he may give

you strength to bear it, that he may not deprive you of it, and do not ask for consolations. Why should you speak of exorcisms, possessions, and visiting holy sanctuaries? In the name of obedience, think no more of them, and drive from your mind every thought against your vocation. If you lose your vocation you will lose your soul and your God. But you will say, *How shall I be able thus to hold out?* Have patience; such is the good pleasure of your Spouse, who very much loves you; yes, believe me, he loves you much, and does everything for your good. It would be to you sweet consolation to know that in all that you suffer you give pleasure to God; now suffer for God, even without knowing this; this will be far better.

If you answer me that it is possible for me to be deceived, I would then say to you that it will no longer be necessary for you to write to me; seek another director in whom you have confidence, come to an understanding with him, and let there be no question about me.

I command you, moreover, in a formal manner, never, never, never to confess these temptations, even if you believe to have consented to them. I say this and take it on my conscience. Do not do so even if you were at the point of death; for there is no sin in all that, as far as you are concerned. The *sentiments* of which you speak are apprehensions, fears; but they are not sins.

But you will say that just the contrary appears to you to be true. — But I say to you, you have not to believe what appears to you to be true, but what the ministers of God say to you. — *And when I shall die? If I die in this state, with these temptations, these sentiments, this affection for sin?* — I say to you that if you die in this state, your salvation is sure.

Well then! I repeat, preserve this letter, and when new trials assail you, go in search of Sister Maria Angiola, and give her this letter to read. Then, I impose it upon you as

a matter of obedience, that you do all that she tells you to do, that you believe all that she tells you, although it may appear to you that new circumstances have supervened.

Recommend me always to Jesus Christ, especially now when I have to go to Naples. This will be in the month of July, and God knows how many months I shall have to languish there on account of our affairs. Here we are in a house full of sick people; recommend to Jesus Christ so many young men who are thus sorely tried.

I send regards to Sister Maria Raffaella, Sister Maria Angiola, Mother Superior, and other Sisters; let them all recommend me to Jesus Christ. Live Jesus and Mary!

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 124.

To Father Giuseppe Muscari.[1]

Immense wrong that he has done to the Congregation. – Entreaty that he should no more bring the Institute into disfavor.

[CIORANI, October 16, 1751.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

It is now two nights, my very dear Father, that I have not closed an eye. It is impossible for me to find peace

[1] Father Giuseppe Muscari, of whom mention has been made above (Letters 107, 108, 109) having been appointed Prefect of students on account of his extensive erudition, abused this high trust and caused the loss of vocation to four young men, namely, Pasquale Adinolfi, Domenico Cacciatore, Gaetano Spera, and Domenico Sviglia. He depicted the condition of the Congregation to these youths in the very darkest colors, and then proposed to found a new Institute in the city of Rome. His treacherous plan was only too successful, for after his dismissal from the Congregation — as

when I recall to mind the disaster brought upon our poor Congregation, which was once so dear to your Reverence, and which has become so odious to you since you have entered it. I could not at first persuade myself that you took any part in the loss of vocation of these unfortunate young men; but now I am convinced that you did both by what they have told me themselves, and by what I have since learned from others. I do not here enter into any details; it would be useless and you would grow only more incensed. You know, my dear Father, that I loved and esteemed you before you had come among us. You also know since you entered what I have done for the purpose of honoring you as much as is possible to do in a poor Congregation such as ours is. I confided to you from the very beginning what I would call our most precious treasure, our young men. I conferred upon you at once the title of Professor, Prefect and spiritual Father of these interesting young men. In order to prevent all ill-feeling, I sent away from Nocera Father Mazzini an estimable and edifying member of the Congregation.[1] This was done not without fear; you understood it well.

You will say, my apprehensions are groundless. Alas! experience has but too well proved that they were not without foundation when we see the ruin of four young

St. Alphonsus had penetrated his base design — the four deluded youths presented themselves to the saint and haughtily demanded a dispensation. Not being able to obtain this, they turned their backs upon their vocation. This sad story may be found in Tannoia in his Life of the saint, Book ii. chap. xxxv. We however add that Gaetano Spera and Domenico Sviglia, seeing the folly of their course, returned after some time, and had the happiness of dying happily in the Congregation, the former in the year 1762, the latter on March 27, 1797.

[1] On account of the ill-feeling that had arisen between Fathers Muscari and Mazzini St. Alphonsus had sent the latter to the house at Caposele.

men, who were truly angels, and who yesterday morning presented themselves before me like so many furies. I began to entreat them with the most tender affection; I went so far as to throw myself at their feet, begging them to put off at least for three days their departure, which they wished to take at once. Poor children! I loved all four of them as the apple of my eye, because they had been real angels, who had particularly distinguished themselves by their sincere humility, edifying all the rest. Yesterday, however, you would have been scandalized yourself had you witnessed their violent agitation, the arrogance with which they spoke to me, the tone of contempt and menace in which they cried out against the Congregation, going so far as to say that they would have recourse to his Majesty and denounce me as trying to keep them back by force, because I refused to grant them the dispensation from their vows and their oath. Good heavens! it was they that bound themselves to Jesus Christ, and they accuse me of holding them back by force! And why then did I not grant them the dispensation for which they had asked? Was it not because I loved them, because I had compassion on them, and because I saw them sacrifice their vocation on account of a mere temptation of the devil?

But enough of this. I do not wish to give you more annoyance; for I very well see that every one of my words must give you pain. Yes, enough of this. Yet neither I nor the Congregation has deserved such treatment from you. I forgive you, and I beg Jesus Christ to forgive you; because I still esteem you, because I love you, and because I entertain the hope that if now you do not open your eyes to your present condition, a day may come when the Blessed Virgin will make you know and deeply deplore an error that has been so fatal to the Congregation and to these four young men. Nothing can dispense you from the obligation of acknowledging this; for the public loudly

accused you of having betrayed the Congregation; the very stones can attest this.

You have written that you would not do the Congregation any harm, that you would even try to be useful to it; well! I conjure you to-day not to inflict any injury; for you would thereby outrage Jesus Christ himself. We are only in this world to suffer and to labor in order to gain poor souls for Jesus Christ; no one knows this better than you. But I tremble to think that hereafter at the very name of the Congregation, the devil may recall to your mind the object of your greatest hatred, and that he may persuade you that you have no other means of justifying your conduct than to defame us. Do not follow this suggestion, my dear Father. I write to you in all sincerity and with tears in my eyes. I entertain the hope that when the passion that actuates you against us and against our wise counsellors has subsided, you will by facts show that the love that you once bore towards our Congregation has again entered your heart.

As for your effects and your books, have no anxiety. It was your person that we have loved and desired, not the objects that you have brought with you. Now it is only your person that I regret to lose; I disregard all the rest. Once more; it is you that I love, and you are not ignorant of my affection and my esteem; as for anything else be without fear; you will be perfectly satisfied.

I remain, yours most respectfully, etc.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 125.

To the Vicar-General of Benevento.

He asks him to do a service.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, November 4, 1751.

Very Reverend and dear Sir: I recommend to your charity our Frater de Angelis, who is truly an angel of virtue. He will call upon you with a letter[1] in reference to the settlement of his patrimony.

At the beginning of the month I will send our Fathers to serve his Eminence[2] and your Reverence in certain places of the diocese of Benevento, and if I can render you any

1 Nicodemo de Angelis saw his profession considerably delayed on account of the requirements of his patrimony. The eulogy bestowed upon him by St. Alphonsus on account of the purity of his morals, he merited during the course of his whole life. We take pleasure in transcribing here a note that Father D. Lorenzo Nigro in "Vita del Servo di Dio Antonio Puzzo, familiare de' PP. del SS. Redentore" (Napoli 1792), has consecrated to his pious memory: "Father D. Nicodemo de Angelis died in our house at Ciorani in the odor of sanctity, aged sixty-two, having been a member of the Congregation for forty-three years and four months. He was visited by the Lord with a long and painful apoplexy, which deprived him of the use of his right arm and left leg. His resignation to the divine will was heroic, and as he could no longer celebrate Mass, he received our Lord every day in holy Communion. He showed the greatest devotion to the Passion of Jesus Christ and to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Most exact in all the exercises of the Community, he was the first to rise in the morning, in all seasons, and went at once to the choir and the church under great difficulties; he could be seen moving through the corridors, resting with one hand against the wall, in order to visit and to speak to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Having been thus tried for more than five years, after many other new sufferings, he died the death of the just in the peace of the Lord, May 19, 1792."

2 Cardinal Francesco Landi.

other service, I shall be at your command. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an original copy preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 126.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Means of preventing the loss of vocation. — Various ordinances regarding the missions.

[November, 1751.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

My very dear Brethren: Know that I am not afflicted to hear that any one of my brethren has been called by God to another life. I am touched by such a thing, because I am a creature of flesh; yet I am comforted because he has died in the Congregation; for then I hold for certain that he is saved. Nor am I afflicted when any one among us, because of his faults, ceases to be a member of the Congregation; on the contrary, I am happy to see that we are delivered from a sickly sheep that might have infected others. Far less am I afflicted because of persecutions; for they inspire me with courage, because if we conduct ourselves well, I am sure that God will not abandon us. But what alarms me is, to hear that there is among us any one that is negligent, that obeys little and pays no attention to the Rule.

My Brethren, you well know that several who have been with us are now out of the Congregation. What their end will be I know not; but I am sure that they will lead a life of continual misfortune; they will live in trouble and die

without peace for having abandoned their vocation. They have left us to live more happily and contentedly; but the thought that they have abandoned God to live according to their own caprice, will never leave them one day of rest. They will practise with difficulty the exercise of prayer, because in prayer they will be harassed by remorse of conscience for having left God; and thus they will abandon prayer, aud God knows where they will end.

I beseech you to avoid deliberate faults, and above all those faults for which you have been reprimanded. If correction leads the delinquent to amend, the fault will be nothing; but when he does not amend, the devil will employ every artifice to make him lose his vocation. It is by this means that he has already caused the loss of so many others.

By the grace of God, whenever we go on missions we perform wonders; people say that they have never had a mission like ours. And why? Because we go by obedience, we go in poverty, we preach Christ crucified, and each one is attentive to acquit himself of the charge that has been imposed upon him. I have, however, been deeply grieved to hear that some among you when on missions have been desirous of obtaining the more honorable employments, such as preaching or instructing. But what fruit could he produce who preaches through pride? This is something that I view with horror. If this spirit of ambition enters the Congregation, the missions will do little good, or they will produce none at all.

I have also been informed that some of you have begun to preach in a flowery style. I repeat that the familiar style is that by which the missions, novenas and spiritual exercises are made successful. In all the sermons, even for the festivals of the saints and other special occasions, I wish that every one should speak familiarly without a studied tone of voice or choice expressions. When one preaches to priests or before a select audience, one should not use in

the discourses phrases so popular as those that one uses when preaching to the people composed of educated and ignorant persons; one should however always speak familiarly; and I pray to Jesus Christ to chastise in a signal manner whoever wishes to introduce a figurative style. Let us take care; for it is certain that pride has driven many out of the Congregation.

On missions pay attention to the food. What aids us to make our missions give great edification is, that we are satisfied with the little that the Rule permits in accordance with what has been our practice heretofore. During the time of the missions I absolutely forbid the eating of chicken or of other things forbidden by the Rule; I will hardly allow in case of accidental sickness the eating of chicken when such a thing has been prescribed by the physician. It would be better to find some other remedy. The same prohibition extends to the case in which one stays at a house in passing from one mission to another, because this time still belongs to the time of the mission.

I also forbid [1] all the Superiors and Ministers without my express permission to allow women of whatever rank to enter our houses, to go to the refectory or the kitchen. I moreover forbid the Superiors to give subjects permission to procure certain special things for their own personal use; if they need these things, let the Community furnish them. I forbid the subjects the keeping of money that is at their free disposal.

My Brethren, let us conduct ourselves well before God, and God will aid us in all the persecutions that men and demons may raise against us. I pray every day, and several times a day, for you all and for each one of you, and I desire each one of you to recommend me in a special

[1] At this time there did not yet exist in the Congregation the law of enclosure which was introduced a short while afterwards.

manner to Jesus Christ. I conclude by blessing you all, one after the other.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After an old copy.

LETTER 127.

To Mother Maria di Gesù, at Ripacandida.

The interest taken by the saint in the Community at Ripacandida.

[December, 1751.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Be without fear; I have punctually received your two letters, and I thank you for your charity. As for going to see you, my dear Mother, the thing is not possible at present. My health will not allow me to make such journeys; besides, I am very busy having a work printed for the use of confessors. I have therefore not a moment to spare this year, and I never leave the house. Later on, who knows? If God wished the foundation,[1] nothing is impossible before God. Mgr. [di Melfi] is much in favor of it; but the difficulty is to receive the king's permission. Pray then for this intention. Who knows what will happen?

But if I do not go to Ripacandida personally, be not disturbed. To give the retreat I will send you a Father with whom, I hope, you will be satisfied. In the mean time tell me what I can do for you with Monsignor to be useful to you and to oblige your Community which is so dear to me. You are in my eyes more than my own sisters, for I know that you love Jesus Christ, my Master. Write me the request that I might make of Monsignor in

1 There was then question of a foundation at Rionero in the diocese of Melfi.

regard to the confessor and the procurator, and always recommend me to Jesus Christ.

In regard to the servant, I have spoken about the matter to Father Fiocchi, and I see no difficulty; the more so as she had already entered; and if she went away it was on account of health. Besides, the other servants are all a little sick.

As to the chorists, I beg you to be firm and not to allow the number to go beyond twenty-one. I have told Father Fiocchi that if he ever uttered a word to the contrary, he should take it back and write to you.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After an old copy.

LETTER 128.

To Father Pietro Petrella,[1] at Iliceto.

Obedience to Superiors is the most essential thing in the Congregation.

Live Jesus and Mary!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, January 5, [1752].

I have been informed that in your house the new Superior, Father Gallo,[2] is not much respected, perhaps because he is young. Let all the Fathers and Brothers who are members and will soon be members of the Community, understand that it is my wish that every Superior whom I send (even though I should send a stick) should be respected as if he were myself; and I wish that he should

[1] Father Petrella was born June 29, 1726, at Trivico; he made his profession, July 2, 1748, and died a holy death at Iliceto, March 15, 1771.

[2] This was probably Father Salvadore Gallo who was then temporary Superior in the absence of Father Carmine Fiocchi. The latter had the preceding month succeeded Father Paolo Cafaro as Rector of the house at Iliceto.

be esteemed and obeyed like myself. Should any one not wish to do this, your Reverence should promptly inform me, and it will then be my duty to inflict upon him an exemplary penance, and in the end if there be no other remedy, I shall be obliged to expel him from the Congregation, even though he were my own brother. If you take away from the Superior all esteem and obedience, of what use will then be the Congregation? If the Superior does something that appears to be wrong, let the subject write to me; in the mean while obey, and do not murmur among yourselves. Read this letter to the members of the Community, and from time to time your Reverence should send me a report about this matter; this I expressly enjoin upon you. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an authentic copy preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 129.

To Father Carmine Picone.[1]

Request to sound the disposition of the Archbishop of Conza on one point.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, January 15, [1752].

My dear Carmine: Now that you are there, if any one of you should have an occasion to see the archbishop, as is

[1] Rev. Father Carmine Picone was born, October 8, 1727, at Candida, in the diocese of Avellino. "I made the acquaintance of the servant of God" — he thus speaks in the process for the beatification of St. Alphonsus — "when I was sent in the year 1749 by my Ordinary to Ciorani to make the spiritual exercises before receiving the Order of subdeaconship. I remained at Ciorani ten days; the servant of God gave the exercises; he preached in the evening and Father

probable before your departure, let him ask him what we should do with the nephew of Father Ferrara[1] who is doing exceedingly well and who declares that he would rather die than go away.

Do not show that you take the affair too much to heart; but recommend to the archbishop this poor young man, who gives great hopes. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 130.

To Mother Maria di Gesù, Prioress of the Carmelites of Ripacandida.

How she should behave in the absence of her director. — Various counsels.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, January 27, 1752.

I answer you in a few words. Although I sympathize with you in your sufferings, yet I am consoled in seeing

Villani in the morning. There I had for the first time an opportunity of beholding his extraordinary zeal and of witnessing the great fruit which resulted from his fervent exhortations. There I heard the voice of God calling me to leave the world and to embrace the Rule of the Congregation..... I then firmly resolved to enter the Institute. This resolution I carried out some six months after the spiritual exercises; I proceeded to the house at Ciorani where the servant of God, after examining me, as well with regard to my vocation as to my studies, admitted me and gave me the habit of the Congregation, October 25, 1749."

The general catalogue of the Congregation speaks in the following terms of this subject: "Father Carmine Picone died in our house at Nocera, October 16, 1795. He was a holy, mortified, and exemplary member of the Institute; on account of his great virtue he was made Master of novices, Rector several terms, and finally Consultor-General.

[1] This nephew of Father Ferrara was the future Father Giuseppe Melchionna, who received the habit of the Congregation, March 4, 1752.

you and your companions placed on the cross; but I regret to hear of the disquietude of your Sisters,[1] which appears to me to be excessive. It is true, you tell me, that they are resigned; but the resignation is not perfect when it is accompanied with disquietude. Ask them for me whence comes this disquietude; perhaps because they do not find such a director as they would desire? But when God wishes this to be so, why should that which pleases God displease them? It is certain that God wishes this to be so, because it is thus commanded by the bishop. It is useless to say that the bishop has been misinformed; for though the bishop may have been deceived in this matter, yet it is certain that God wishes this of you. Besides, I hold for certain that the bishop had good reasons to act in this manner, either to put an end to the talk, etc.

But you will say, *What shall we do without a director?* What! is God no longer here? How many souls have sanctified themselves in grottoes, in deserts, in which they had no other companions than birds and trees? When we have a director that is suitable, and do not wish to avail ourselves of his services, God will give us no assistance; but when such a director is wanting, as is frequently the case outside of Naples, to the great regret of many good souls, then God takes charge of everything. The Lord

[1] Mgr. Basta was a very great friend of the Carmelite Fathers, whose Order he even wished at one time to enter; but this friendship was the cause of great embarrassment to the holy Prioress of the convent of Ripacandida. The fact was, the Carmelites of Naples wished to introduce into this monastery a mitigation to which both the Prioress and St. Alphonsus were opposed. Moreover, as Mother Maria di Gesù was following extraordinary ways, the bishop had her examined by a Carmelite Father, and the latter declared her to be a visionary. Finally, in the year 1752, Mgr. Basta, after having taken away from the Sisters their old director, forbade them to have any communication with other directors. This rigorous measure caused great disquietude among these religious, St. Alphonsus tries in this letter to remove this disquietude.

will not fail to assist those that seek him with their whole heart.

Read this letter to your Sisters, and after some time write to me again; console me with the information that you and your companions have thrown yourselves into the arms of the amiable Jesus, who allows himself to be easily found by the soul that seeks him.

Have no scruple, neither now, nor later, for having written to me without permission. It is sufficient that I tell you this, and do not try to find out the reason. But tell your Sisters, who are also my sisters, to keep this a secret from every one, from the confessor, and even from the bishop.

As for the supernatural graces, recommend to the Sisters never to speak of them to that confessor, and I give you the same advice in regard to whatever may concern you; tell him only your faults in order to receive absolution from time to time. Let the Sisters make known all the rest to yourself; and you, as a general thing, after having heard them, will answer that those things are dreams and effects of the imagination, and that the important thing is to wish only what God wishes, to embrace and to love sufferings, contempt, poverty, and contradictions. Take care that the Community observe in a perfect manner obedience, prayer, and poverty; with these three things perfection will always increase in the monastery. In your familiar discourses, in the Chapters, chiefly revert to these three points.

The fears that you experience console me; I tremble for souls that rest too securely in their spiritual affairs. However, I do not wish any disquietude; the true fear of God produces not disquietude, but peace and joy. For myself, I assure you that God is with you; what more do you wish? and as for the things that concern you and that you have communicated to me, I regard them, for the most part, as the things of God. That is enough. In all your

fears, say: My God, I wish only Thee. Then be calm, and banish all uneasiness; for after what you have written to me, I have also discovered a certain excessive disquietude, which does not please God.

I pray for you and for your Sisters. But do not fail, you and your Sisters, to pray in all your Communions for my soul, for the Congregation, and also for the foundation at Rionero, on the subject of which I fear that the bishop has grown indifferent. Impose this upon your Sisters in all their Communions. We have on our hands an important affair concerning the Congregation. Moreover a Father who is very useful to the Institute is sick.[1] To my intention make a novena of nine *Hail Marys* every day to obtain these favors, and ask for them during the nine days in holy Communion. Remain in the hearts of Jesus and Mary. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved at Scicli in the family of the Dukes La Rocca.

LETTER 131.

To Father Saverio Rossi, Minister of the House at Ciorani.

Penance which he imposes upon a lay-brother for having committed a grave fault.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, 10, [May, 1752].

Brother Francesco deserves no compassion; however as he has spent many years in the Congregation, and has

[1] This important affair was a persecution from which the Institute suffered in consequence of a calumny circulated against it. The king was made to believe that the Congregation had acquired a property of great value. — The sick man was Father Paolo Cafaro.

humbled himself, we desire to be indulgent towards him; but he must accept a penance that will be long and severe. [1]

Take the habit from him, and let him wear the secular dress, since he no longer belongs to the Congregation, having been dismissed, and his condition is like that of an ordinary postulant. In this point we cannot be indulgent. Let him remain secluded in the novitiate; he should not come to the refectory, to recreation, and should not go out. In regard to meals, impose also some mortification upon him, which I leave to your prudence. Help him or have him helped as to his spiritual wants. He may receive Communion once a week.

Tell Don Angelo Antonio [1] to come some day to see me, for I wish to instruct him what and how he should study.

Send me again a little roasted coffee. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Tell Brother Francesco that it is to me that he owes this indulgence, because I wish him well. I hardly think that another Superior would have done all this for him. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO.

After the original in possession of Prince Antici at Rome.

[1] Brother Francesco Tartaglione, carried away by the passion of anger had thrown a tumbler at a lay-brother who offended him by some sarcastic words. He received his penance in the spirit of humility, after which he was admitted to profession, October 31, 1752.

[2] This was a young priest from the diocese of Cava, who on account of the opposition made by his family was not as yet able to begin his novitiate.

LETTER 132.

To Father Francesco Margotta, Procurator-General of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

He begs him to regard the poverty of a house of the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, June 2, 1752.

A Mass-intention should not be taken from Iliceto, for Father Fiocchi (I did not think of telling you) celebrates Mass for this house at Pagani, which has no other revenues than those derived from Mass-stipends. In fact it is impossible in view of the circumstances which you know to force the debtors to pay at the present time. They give you threats for an answer. Patience then, for pity's sake. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Oliviero writes to me that when he called upon the book-seller of whom you spoke, *Tournely* had been sold. I have told him to look for it elsewhere. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of Father Frederico Bozzaotra, C. SS. R.

LETTER 133.

To Father Pietro Petrella, at Iliceto.

He grants him various permissions.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, June 7, [1752].

Yes, I received your second letter, which it was not necessary to answer. When you are not well, obedience in regard to study is not necessary; when afterwards you are

not using medicine, you may apply to study during the hour that I have assigned to you. Tell this to the Superior and also mention to him the obedience under which I have put you, and then do what he says.

Yes, go to take the baths, and be guided by your Superior.

Blasucci [1] is at Caposele: we are going to see how he will get on there, and afterwards we may think of what is to be done. As for Andretta, go there with a companion. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After a copy.

LETTER 134.

To Mgr. Borgia, Bishop of Cava.

Details relative to the vocation of a young priest.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, June 7, 1752.

I have received your last most esteemed letter, and at the same time another letter from the house at Ciorani in which it is stated that the parish priest of N. and another relative of the said priest had arrived there. They made a new assault upon the latter so as to make him set out for his home, etc. I am, however, informed that Don Antonio strongly insists that he will on no account return home, because he fears that he will lose his vocation in the midst of so many temptations that he foresees will assail him. My dear Monsignor, under such circumstances, I do not

[1] Pietro Paolo Blasucci, who in 1793 became Superior-General of the Congregation, secretly fled from Ruovo, his native place, in order to enter the Institute of the Most Holy Redeemer. After the opposition of his family had subsided, he began his novitiate, August 14, of the year 1752.

dare in conscience to dismiss him, and to order him positively that he should return home. I should feel a scruple if I did so, after what the young man has himself told me, and according to the letter which I sent your Reverence yesterday, which I hope you have already read. God knows what remorse I felt when I suggested to him the other day that he should go to his own home at Naples. In order to satisfy his relatives and not to see us disquieted by what his father has threatened to do, if he remained in our house, Don Antonio is at present ready to go to some monastery of monks until the tempest has subsided and the danger that threatens to disturb us has ceased. I have, therefore, written to the Fathers at Ciorani to favor this design and to send this subject to some religious house other than ours outside of Naples; because it would be inexpedient to have him stay at Naples, under the present circumstances. After this has been done, I do not know what else the relatives could claim, since no other order could come to us from Marquis Fraggianni, or from the Palace, than that he should be sent to a neutral place. This once happened to Father Fiocchi, who obeyed the order, and afterwards returned to the Congregation. I urge this the more, since I hear that the mother is already beginning to be more tranquil, and the father will hardly carry out what he has threatened to do. For the rest, my dear Monsignor, do not doubt that I will not receive the above-mentioned priest into the Congregation unless you have given your consent.. I remain, very respectfully, etc. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 135.

To Father Andrea Villani, Rector of the House at Ciorani and Master of Novices.

Various details concerning the novitiate and the house at Ciorani.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, 14, [June, 1752].

As for Don [Angelo] Antonio, I have no doubt that he will succeed, since his father himself says that he has always been an angel of virtue. But we must wait and try to satisfy Mgr. Borgia. This is sufficient; later on you may shorten his novitiate by adding this time to it.

As for the young man of Riccia and as for Pietro Picone, they may begin their novitiate.[1]

In regard to Melaccio and Cimino, do what your Reverence thinks best.[2]

I am glad to hear about the altar, and I give my blessing for artificial flowers and candlesticks.

When recited privately it seems to me that it is not forbidden to use the usual formula.

For your guidance, a letter has been written [to Naples] to Don Giovanni [Oliviero], and the latter writes me that he is going to open the subscription without delay.[3]

I have appointed the consultors for Iliceto; but write again to this house: they are Fathers Ferrara and Carbone. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Tell the Vice-Rector [Father Saverio Rossi] about what

[1] In fact, Ignazio Fiore, a native of Riccia and Pietro Picone began their novitiate June 21.

[2] There is question of the profession of Donato Melaccio and of Fabrizio Cimino, which took place July 16 of this year.

[3] This subscription aimed at promoting the sale of the Moral Theology of the saint, a second edition of which was at that time being printed at Naples.

[D. Andrea] Sarnelli writes, that he should do what he says, and procure some alms; at least let him endeavor to satisfy Don Andrea and to inform him that what has been ordered has been done. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Let Father Saverio come to an understanding with the Baron [Nicola Sarnelli] in regard to the place where the church [1] is to be. Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO.

[*P. S.*] I send the prospectus of the subscription, Oliviero writes that in October the first volume will be issued.

Send me your manuscript copy of the exercises of the missions; and if yours cannot be found, send me at least that which Father Buonamano has copied. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the original preserved at Naples in the church of the Redemption of Captives.

[1] To understand these words it is enough to refer to a passage of a letter from Father Rossi, written in answer, June 20: "My Father (thus speaks Rossi), I have already spoken to Signor D. Andrea about the building of a church, and I have promised him to spend for it every year one hundred ducats; the mode of carrying away the earth has been discussed and the baron has been approached on the subject; he also has the intention of contributing something towards the building of the church, and Don Andrea has offered to furnish all the lime and to maintain the expense of two oxen that are to be used to carry the material."

LETTER 136.

To the Same.

Various affairs.

[June 19, 1752.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I have received the writing. As for the ambrette-flowers;[1] you may send them later, if there is no risk in the delay.

As regards the lot it is sufficient to talk about the matter and come to some agreement; and so, in regard to the demand of Don Andrea Sarnelli, it is enough if he sees that something is done.

I am glad to hear about Father Corpo;[2] do what you think will be best.

After the morning and the evening meditation, say a *Salve Regina* with the prayer *Defende* for the house at Iliceto which is passing through great misery. The people of Iliceto have become our opponents, saying that they wish to have there a seminary.

To-morrow, Tuesday, I must go to Salerno on account of Sarnelli's affair.[3]

Don Angelo Antonio has informed us that his infirmity is but too true, that he cannot apply his head to anything, and that during these past few days he was quite ill. He himself has doubts about his vocation; hence I plainly told

[1] The *ambrette* is a plant with the odor of *ambergris* or musk. — Perhaps the saint intended these plants to adorn the altar of the Blessed Sacrament.

[2] Father Francesco Del Corpo had made his profession a month before, that is, May 13.

[3] That is, for the affair of the foundation of the house at Ciorani made by D. Andrea Sarnelli. The saint, to secure its stability, caused another contract to be made by which (the Congregation having already been declared by the civil authority incapable of making any purchase) he personally accepted the donation from D. Andrea.

him that the Congregation was not the place for him. He at once started this morning for Cava. I gave him a letter addressed to Monsignor. I wish him a safe journey!

He was a good young man, but he had not studied, nor could he study, nor be confined to the house; I therefore would have been troubled with scruples had I received him. As to the watch, I spoke to him about it; but when I handed it to him he said that nothing further need be said about it. He said Mass for Ciorani up to Friday.

On Thursday send me Father [Gerardo] Grassi, if he is there, or another Father to be the companion of Father Lorenzo [d' Antonio] for the novena at S. Matteo.[1] Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of Father D. Francesco Sav. Imperio, C. SS. R.

LETTER 137.

To the Same.

Solicitude of the saint about the health of his subjects.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NAPLES, July 22, [1752?]

In reference to Father D. Antonio [Tannoia], yes; do as you think fit; you may send him to Pagani. It will also be necessary to send to the same place Father Celestino [de Robertis] if his chest-trouble does not become better. But try, if possible, to send a little help to Pagani. See to it that the novices do not take too many bloody disciplines during this hot weather. Inquire whether the air of Iliceto might not be better for Father Antonio; but try Pagani first. Live Jesus and Mary!

[1] San Matteo, a hamlet of Nocera.

Recommend me to the Blessed Virgin, etc. — Live Jesus and Mary!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 138.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Humility, but profound humility, is the true safeguard of perseverance.

[July 27, 1752.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

My dearest Fathers and Brothers in Jesus Christ:

I pray God to drive out quickly those proud spirits who cannot and who will not bear in the Congregation any reproof or slight, not only from Superiors, but even from their equals and their inferiors. And I beg of the Lord to drive me out the first if ever I should be led by this spirit of pride. See how this cursed spirit has driven Father Tortora [1] out of the Congregation: and I thank Jesus Christ for this, because such subjects ruin the Congregation and keep back from us the blessings of God. He that is not determined to be as earth, and to let himself be trodden

[1] Father Bernardo Tortora, born at Nocera de' Pagani, entered the Congregation in 1743. The cause of his secession from the Congregation, which happened July 25, 1752, is given by Tannoia in his Life of the saint: "While living in the house at Ciorani, he took offence at a correction given him by the Rector, and without breathing a word, or communicating his temptation to any one, he set out for Pagani with the intention of laying the whole matter before St. Alphonsus. On the way his eyes were opened, and not having the courage to present himself, he retired to his own family, instead of going to one of our houses." Later on he became parish priest of the church of St. Felice at Pagani.

under foot by all, let him go, and go quickly. Our Lord will be more pleased with the perseverance of two or three that are really humble and mortified, than with a thousand such imperfect subjects. And what have we come to do in the Congregation, if we do not wish to bear even some slight for the love of Jesus Christ? How shall we have the face to preach humility to so many people, when we ourselves have such an abhorrence for humiliations? But since we are all miserable creatures, I beg each one of you — and that your Reverences may the better remember what I now say, I even give you the obedience, to ask of the despised Jesus, every day during the meditation or thanksgiving, the grace to bear contempt with peace and cheerfulness of spirit; and the more fervent shall positively pray that Jesus may let them be despised for the love of him. And let him who will not make this prayer from his heart and with the desire of being heard fear lest his pride drive him out of the Congregation, in the same way as pride has already driven out more than one.

Next, I earnestly recommend you never to talk among yourselves of the affairs and of the proceedings of the Superiors. Those that are led by this spirit of indiscreet zeal do much more harm than good to the Congregation. Those that are really zealous, when they perceive some disorder or want of observance, should tell it privately to the Admonitor of the house, or even inform the Rector Major of it; and if they perceive that even the Rector Major neglects to remedy it, they should speak or write to his Admonitor. Let all pay attention to this point, otherwise they will cause me great displeasure, and will oblige me henceforward to mortify them severely. And let us be careful to guard against small faults, because the devil makes use of these little *foxes* to destroy the Spirit of God, and even our vocation. Therefore, my dear Brethren, let us always

strengthen ourselves by meditation and prayer, otherwise we shall succeed in nothing.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very affectionate confrère,

ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] I, the undersigned Rector Major, impose upon all the professed members of our Congregation or Society and give the formal precept of obedience to them not to leave any of our houses without the express permission of the local Superior, except when any one wishes to speak to the Rector Major or the Sovereign Pontiff: in this case he is yet obliged to ask the permission of the local Rector; but if he does not obtain it, he may set out, without however staying at any other place.

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
Rector Major.

After an old copy.

LETTER 139.

To Father Francesco Buonamano.[1]

He congratulates him on the detachment that he showed in regard to his relatives.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, September 16, [1752].

Your letter to Father Pentimalli has given me much consolation by acquainting me with the beautiful sentiments

[1] This excellent religious was born November 9, 1706. When forty-three years old he resolved to enter the Congregation, having been moved thereto by the holy life of Father Cesare Sportelli. After a novitiate of six months he made his profession in the presence of St. Alphonsus, August 5, 1750. He became an indefatigable missionary, and died in the peace of the Lord, March 4, 1777, in the house at Ciorani. — The journey to Ischia, of which

with which you are animated in regard to your relatives; I wish all were so disposed. I permitted Father Pentimalli to send you to Ischia, because I thought that you perhaps desired to go there; but as your Reverence is unwilling, I repeat, I am consoled, and I do not tell you to go there. Remember me every day at your Mass. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I give you my blessing. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 140.

To a Father of the Congregation.

A great trial to which the Congregation is exposed.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NAPLES, Saturday 23, [September, 1752.]

I am to remain here till Saturday a week. Next Thursday our affairs will be transacted. Let us pray to God that at least the houses may be left to us. Marquis Brancone has insinuated to me that I should give up two of them. However, if the houses are left to us, we shall be obliged in looking for revenues to abandon ourselves to the will of God; for things will then go badly. But if we had not had Brancone we should perhaps be now dispossessed; for in the last council the king spoke perhaps most strongly against us. Let us, therefore, be satisfied with the things as they are, and with the decrees of divine Providence.

Communicate this to the other chorists according as prudence may dictate, in order that they may pray fervently during these days in which we are not yet out of danger. This morning I had a lively dispute with Brancone, and I am astonished that he is not tired of our affairs. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After an old copy unfortunately incomplete.

mention is made in the letter was to have taken place on the occasion of the mission at Casamicciola, the native place of Father Buonamano.

LETTER 141.

To the King of Naples.

Petition to obtain the *exequatur* of the Apostolic Brief *Ad Pastoralis dignitatis fastigium*—a Brief given in confirmation of the Institute of the Most Holy Redeemer.[1]

[September, 1752.]

Alfonso de Liguori, a Neapolitan priest, and his companions, missionaries of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer humbly represent to your Majesty, that it is already nineteen years that they are devoting themselves to the spiritual culture of the abandoned people in country places. They travel over the mountains, visit the huts of the shepherds and places most destitute of spiritual help, to instruct these poor people by missions, instructions and other devout exercises. They have now succeeded in giving about forty missions a year, in the space of at least nine months in the year, during which they consecrate themselves to this kind of work. The great and general good that is seen resulting from this work in many provinces of this kingdom where the missions have been given, has stimulated the zeal of some bishops and has induced them to introduce said Institute into their dioceses; thus it is established in the diocese of Salerno at Ciorani; of Nocera at Pagani; in the diocese of Bovino at Iliceto; in that of Conza at Caposele. In each of these places the missionaries have their own house where they live together, and this is done with the consent of your Majesty who has even deigned by several royal decrees addressed to the civil tribunal to approve the great benefit of this work by applying to it the superfluous income of the laic chapels, an aid that could not be procured, as there was no income over and above the expenses that were incurred by them.

[1] This petition, as may be inferred from a letter of July 4, 1753, was not presented to the king, at least in this year.

Then the number of the subjects having increased in this Congregation, in order to establish in perpetuity so great a good, a petition has been addressed by its members, as well as by the bishops of the dioceses above-mentioned, to the present Sovereign Pontiff, to obtain through his apostolic authority the confirmation and approbation of the Institute and of the Rule of this Congregation. And now after the information gathered by the Sacred Congregation of the Council, to which His Holiness intrusted this affair, there have been obtained, conformably to the wish of the examiners, the apostolic Brief of confirmation, which begins with these words: *Ad Pastoralis dignitatis fastigium.* No use, however has been made of this Brief, hoping that your Majesty would deign to grant the *exequatur*, as we hope to obtain by this petition.

This is the reason why the undersigned humbly have recourse to the royal clemency, and beg your Majesty to grant them the favor of the said *exequatur* in order that in this kingdom may remain established this work which concerns so much the glory of God and the spiritual good of those subjects that are most abandoned. The latter are ignorant even of the most necessary things of faith, especially the shepherds who live in the territory of Puglia, belonging to the royal patrimony of your Majesty. The undersigned missionaries have also taken a house in this last mentioned Province in order to bestow every care upon those poor shepherds, the number of whom is about forty thousand.

Confiding, therefore, in the great piety and zeal of your Majesty, the petitioners humbly present the Apostolic Brief and hope to obtain the favor that they solicit.

After the original in possession of the Redemptorist Fathers of Vaals (Limbourg, Holland).

LETTER 142.

To Mother Maria di Gesù, a Carmelite at Ripacandida.

The saint recommends to her prayers Marquis Brancone on account of the resolution that the latter had formed.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, December 12, [1752].

We have run a great risk of seeing the Congregation completely dissolved; but by the grace of God the king afterwards honored us with a very favorable decree. Marquis Brancone has strongly sustained our credit; please, my dear Mother, recommend him to God. I also beg you (this in confidence) to make a novena to his intention. He is filled with uncertainty; there is question whether or not he should renounce his charge in order to devote himself to his own salvation by leading a private life. I have dissuaded him from this project; for the good of the Church requires that he should not give up his post. After the novena let me know with what the Lord [1] has inspired you. Recommend me to Jesus Christ.

[1] From the following letter written by Brancone to the saint we can conjecture the reply of the saintly Prioress.

NAPLES, February 10, 1753.

Dearest Friend: Your letters, the one dated the 29th of last month, and the other, the 4th of this month, filled me with consolation, for in them I read the proofs of your kindness and of the love which you bear me: I thank you with all my heart.

I have read the letter of the Prioress of Ripacandida, which you kindly sent to me. Rest assured that I shall never communicate to any one what has been confided to me by you and by her. The letter showed me that she held with regard to my proposed step the same opinion that some other devout and learned persons hold. I adore the divine will which disposes of me in this manner, and I shall continue to bear my burden with the greatest devotion and cheerfulness, hoping that our Lord will deign to bless me. I have

Let the Carmelites, the Dominicans, etc., and others, who ever they may be, come; do not deviate from that which I have written to you. Write to me about the doubts that you have; but abridge your letter as much as possible. I knew that the Carmelite Father had forbidden you the daily Communion. I have created a noise about this with Monsignor (but say nothing about this). I know not what he will do.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After an old copy.

LETTER 143.

To a Friend.

He thanks him for the interest that he takes in the Institute.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, December 25, 1752.

I have received your very dear letter, and I thank you for the great affection that you bear towards this poor little

never refused to bear the burden, nor am I doing so now; but as I see how difficult it is to work out my eternal salvation, I grow despondent and my courage vanishes. For this reason I ask you and all your chosen souls to obtain for me from God better health that I may fulfill the duties of my office scrupulously and cheerfully. And as in your letters you spoke of the Prioress, Sister Maria di Gesù, as a pious servant of God, I feel a great desire to open a correspondence with her for my spiritual advantage; I hope to obtain this favor through you and through the bishop to whom she is subject. Hence, as soon as you approve of my wish, let me know where Ripacandida is situated, and whether the Prioress — as a Carmelite — is subject to the Provincial of the Carmelites or to the bishop. If the latter be the case, please tell me who the bishop is, adding at the same time what you know about the family of the Prioress and of the condition of the nuns in the monastery. I intend to do this under your direction and with your approval.

I thank you for your prayers, and I beg you to continue them.....

flock of Jesus Christ in the midst of persecutions. The tempest that hell has raised against us is not a small affair; but the Lord has turned it all to a good account; for the king who was at first somewhat against us, is now in our favor. It is true that in the decree some restrictions have been placed upon us; but we are satisfied with the result, because the work is now approved and established; and this is most important. For the rest, if we remain poor, it is sure that as long as we conduct ourselves well, God will not fail us. I know that you have always been our protector, and I hope that you will ever be so. I recommend myself to your prayers, and I wish you a happy new year, that is a year full of love for Jesus and Mary. I remain, etc. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 144.

To Father Bernardo Apice,[1] at Caposele.

He refuses to grant him permission to change his abode and tries to quiet him.

[1752 or 1753.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I received a letter from Father Paolo [Cafaro] that I should send you to Iliceto. But I see that this is not the will of God, but a temptation of the devil who sees the good that you are doing in the place where you are. If you go to Iliceto what good will you do there? Father Paolo says that all things appear to you to be black at Caposele.

[1] Father Bernardo Apice, born at Castellammare, December 21, 1728, made his religious profession, January 6, 1748, and died September 9, 1769. He had therefore spent twenty-two years in apostolic labors, now in Naples, now in Sicily, where he was Rector for three years. Father Agostino Saccardi wrote the life of this saintly man, which was printed at Naples in the year 1816.

But if you give yourself up entirely to obedience, they will all appear to you to be white. Hence I beg you to devote yourself to the doing of God's will, otherwise you will everywhere be full of disquietude. At least write to me what it is that troubles you in that house; it may induce me to make a change; for so far I do not see what can be a sufficient reason for altering my views in your regard. My dear Bernardo, know that I have always wished, and do now wish, well to you. Be calm, for your disquietude will also be mine. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 145.

To Mgr. Pasquale-Teodoro Basta, Bishop of Melfi.[1]

Confidential letter in regard to the ordination of a subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, February 10, 1753.

Right Reverend and Dear Sir: I ask your Lordship to read this letter privately, and then to destroy it.

Don Angelo Antonio Grazioli[2] is anxious that I should ask your Lordship to confer upon him during this Lent the last two sacred Orders. In regard to the interstices, he would himself, he says, ask the necessary dispensation at

1 Born at Monteparano (diocese of Taranto) April 26, 1711, he was appointed Bishop of Melfi, January 9, 1748, and occupied this see till the beginning of the year 1766.

2 Born at Atella (diocese of Melfi) June 13, 1724, he took the habit of our Congregation November 12, 1759, and made profession November 21, 1760. He was probably the son of Don Benedetto Grazioli, a distinguished benefactor of the Institute, who is often mentioned in the letters of St. Alphonsus.

Rome. I therefore write to you on this subject; but for the rest, your Lordship may do what you think will be best before God.

As for the foundation,[1] I beg you, Monsignor, not to take any steps before we have had an understanding with each other; for a favorable moment must be chosen if we do not wish to risk ruining both the foundation and the Congregation.[2]

With respect to Don Angelo Antonio, be so kind as to write me a letter which I may give him to read; but do not say, I beg you, that I wrote to you so dryly. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Begging your blessing,

I remain your Lordship's,

very humble, devoted, and grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved at the cathedral of Melfi.

LETTER 146.

To Mother Maria di Gesù, a Carmelite at Ripacandida.

He refuses to allow a Father of the Congregation to be extraordinary confessor, and exhorts her to remain firm in the defence of regular observance.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, February 23, [1753].

I answer your two letters. I rejoice that you are laboring to re-establish regular observance. Continue, and be firm. In reference to your doubts, recommend yourself to Jesus Christ, and go ahead.

[1] There was question of making a foundation at Rionero (see Letter 127).

[2] The Congregation was then exposed to various persecutions on the part of the civil government because of pretended acquisitions.

As for your request that you make to me to grant you Father Fiocchi as extraordinary confessor two or three times a year, how can I consent, since that is expressly forbidden by our Rule? What! do you wish me to be driven out of the Congregation? If the consultors hear that I am introducing such an abuse against the Rule, they may expel me. I highly esteem your monastery and your Rule; but I cannot do what is against our Rule. You know how difficult it is to remove an abuse when it has once been introduced; I hope to be able to die with the consciousness of never having permitted any. If I should grant to your monastery what you ask, I could not refuse it to others, or at least, the Superiors that come after me would grant it after my example; and thus you see the Fathers would give up the missions in order to become extraordinary confessors and to give retreats to religious. I should be very glad if you would make this clear to the bishop, whom I very much esteem, and to whom I regret to be obliged to refuse anything.

The answer that I am now giving you will appear without doubt very harsh; but I should wish that you were in my place. If you were Rector Major you would speak as I do. I know by experience what fine things I have been obliged to hear from my confrères when I have given any permission that was against the Rule, though there was question of matters by no means so important as this. You may also write to Father Fiocchi; you will see that his answer will be like mine. May this, however, not prevent you from recommending me to Jesus Christ, just as I do not omit to pray for you and for all your Sisters.

I do not answer separately the letter that Sister Maria Cherubina has written to me; but as there are no secrets between you and her, I here say to her as well as to you, and to all the other fervent religious: Be firm like a rock; answer resolutely the bishop, the Carmelite Father, and all

the others, that you have made profession according to the Rule of St. Teresa; that you wish to observe it punctually, *ad literam* [to the letter]; and that no one can exempt you from it. The Carmelite Father will speak perhaps in this manner, because the Rule has been mitigated for the nuns of his observance; answer that you do not wish to follow the Rule of these religious, but the Rule of St. Teresa. Remain firm; Jesus and Mary will sustain you.

You should do this yourselves, because Father Fiocchi cannot place himself in opposition to the bishop; but you yourselves can well do this when there is question of defending regular observance. You have scarcely begun, and you already wish to have your Rule mitigated! But if the Rule is now mitigated, what will become of the Rule fifty years hence? Indeed, poor religious are those that ask for a mitigation of the Rule! I pity them; for they will have to render an account to God not only about themselves, but about all the others. I pray you, be firm! If you think fit, you may communicate these my sentiments to the others. If you were to inform me that the rigor of the Rule has been relaxed, you would make me lose all the affection that I entertain for this monastery, which I at present esteem so much. Tell Sister Maria Cherubina that she should incessantly raise her voice against the Carmelite Father, who is trying to bring about a mitigation; let her have no scruple in this respect. Of what use is it to look for directors and to ask for Father Fiocchi? It is your Rule that should direct you; keep your Rule, and you will all become saints.

As for me, I will see what I can do in this matter. At all events, banish from your mind the idea of having Father Fiocchi twice or three times a year as your extraordinary confessor: that is impossible; it is forbidden to us to exercise this function even once, outside of the time of the mission.

Write about this to Father Fiocchi, and tell him also to write to me about it. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 147.

To the Same.

Signs of illusion. — How to act in reference to extraordinary graces.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, March 28, [1753].

I have received your last letter through your brother. Relatively to the direction by Father Fiocchi, I am satisfied with the sensible and holy answer that you have given me; for you may rest assured that what I do not do for your soul, I would certainly not do for any other. Moreover, I cheerfully permit that Father Fiocchi should answer all your doubts, and I shall also allow him to call upon you sometimes.

As regards what you add, namely, that you are in great fear and uncertainty, and that several Fathers tell you that you are laboring under an illusion and that you are in error, I am more glad to hear this than that you raised ten dead persons to life. All this gives me the assurance that you are not under an illusion nor in error. Persons that are led astray by illusions fully believe in their errors; but you fear illusion, and this is a sign that you are not deceived. Pray therefore to Jesus Christ to preserve you in this fear, if it contributes to his glory. I moreover, in the name of Jesus Christ, command you to dilate your heart towards God, and act as you did before, with liberty and great confidence. I assure you that you are neither deceiving yourself nor are

you deceived. Receive with affection and without fear the lights and the marks of tenderness that the Lord gives to your soul; and in future banish all fears as temptations, whatever others may have said and still say to you.

Those directors had the best intention in speaking thus to you, since they have followed the general rule which requires that favored souls should be humbled and kept down lest they fall into pride. This rule, however, does not apply to your soul. You are not going to boast of ecstasies or of prophesies. You are not going to publish to the first one that you meet what concerns you, as others do, whereby they certainly give rise to the suspicion that they are under illusions, and that they are deceiving others. I know that you do not speak except in case of necessity, when you ask aid and counsel.

On the other hand, God gives you enough light to know what you are, and what you merit because of your defects and your miseries. Is there, then, any reason why you should be deceived by the devil? What! the devil! No, no; it is God who keeps himself near you and around you, because he wishes you to belong entirely to him. Hence when he removes the veil to speak to you by communicating to you his lights, begin by humbling yourself when you see him granting such favors to so ungrateful a soul; abase yourself by considering your nothingness; then, confiding in the mercy and infinite goodness of the Sovereign Good, abandon yourself as a dead person to his tender arms, and receive with gratitude and affection all the lights and all the other favors that he lavishes upon your soul. May they cause you to humble yourself still more, and to redouble your zeal and fidelity in his holy love. I also recommend to you, when God leaves you alone and does not bestow upon you any caresses, not to complain either interiorly or exteriorly, not to become disquieted on account of their absence, nor to seek them, because there may be

some illusion in this search. Henceforth, I repeat, do not be disturbed about what is said of you; as an answer, say within yourself: *I wish only God*, — and then remain quiet. Uneasiness suits only the soul that seeks everything else but God.

Preserve this letter in order to derive strength from it when others again disturb you. If anything particular happens to you write me briefly the substance of it; I shall then steal a moment, as I do now, to answer you; yet only in a few words, as I have not a moment's time. Furthermore, I beg you not to raise so many doubts, and not to wish to know in everything whether or not it is God that speaks, as this solicitude may injure you. With God, with this infinite Goodness, we must walk quite simply and honestly. Do therefore what you think is best, and move onward.

In meditation, if you experience dryness, always sustain yourself by prayer and by continual offerings of yourself to God; but as soon as the Lord speaks to you, abstain from speaking, and open your soul to receive all that he has to communicate to you. In all your prayers remember my soul. Never forget to recommend the souls in purgatory and poor sinners. Pray especially for Naples, where it is said there are many atheists who deny the existence of God; remember them as well as our Congregation. Take courage! God is with you. *Dominus illuminatio mea et salus mea; quem timebo?* [The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? — *Ps.* xxvi. 1.] May Jesus be our love and Mary our hope! I am having printed a little work on the "Manner of Conversing with God:" I shall send it to you.

[*P. S.*] One word more. I have written to the bishop to ask him to give you permission to answer Brancone. If he gives you permission, answer the Marquis that you do not forget to recommend him to God without ceasing, in order that the Lord may give him the necessary light and

strength to walk on the right road by defending the interests of the Church in the position that he occupies; and you must encourage him. It matters little that his letter was lost; for it contained nothing more than a request that you should recommend him to God. Answer him then, as I have indicated, if you receive permission, without saying that his letter was lost. You may say without scruple: *I answer your letter, etc.* Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After an old copy.

LETTER 148.

To Father Carmine Fiocchi [1] in Lacedogna.

He speaks to him about some missions that he wishes him to give.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, April 2. [1753?]

Mgr. [Antonio Manerba, Bishop] of S. Angelo wrote to me for a mission to be given after Easter; I wrote back to

[1] Father D. Carmine Fiocchi was born June 13, 1721, at Caiano, in the diocese of Salerno of respectable and virtuous parents. At an early age he was a model of fervor. Prayer was his delight, and so desirous was he of doing penance that his mother was obliged to take from him the instruments of mortification with which he tortured his innocent body. When he reached the proper age, his parents sent him to Naples where he might receive an education suitable to his birth and fortune. There in the course of his studies, in which he distinguished himself, he remained steadfast in piety, so that his beautiful soul, full of the love of Jesus Christ well understood how to despise the vain allurements of the world. Having entered the seminary of Salerno, young Fiocchi soon after received subdeaconship. Anxious however to belong to God without reserve, he aspired to the religious life, and after having prayed much, his choice fell upon the Congregation of St. Alphonsus. He then wrote to the holy founder who, after examining his vocation, wrote to him that it came from God, that God wished him to belong entirely to

him that I would serve him; but his nephew again wrote that the affair would be spoken of when Monsignor returned home. See therefore that the time of this mission be fixed for the Sunday *in Albis* [Low Sunday]; because if the date is not acceptable, we shall have to go to Frigenti and then to Fontanarosa, as I have promised Mgr. [Felice Leoni,

Him, and finally that the resolution that he had formed should be at once put in execution.

Animated by these words the fervent seminarian hastened to Ciorani to make his novitiate. His parents, notwithstanding their piety, were in consternation on account of his departure, and so much were they moved by their affection for flesh and blood that they applied to the civil authorities to aid them in their design. The authorities arrogating to themselves the right of sustaining such unjust pretensions, ordained that the novice should be shut up in a convent at Salerno, there to examine and to prove better his vocation. But with God's help the young man triumphed over all obstacles and had finally the satisfaction of being able to return to the novitiate, where he made his religious profession in the presence of St. Alphonsus, May 8, 1744.

After he had become a priest, he was destined for the work of the missions. The success that he met with was wonderful. Without any fear of exaggeration it may be asserted that he was one of the greatest missionaries of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. During the thirty years that he spent in this laborious ministry, he led back to God innumerable sinners, sanctified the clergy of many dioceses, and re-kindled fervor in a great number of monasteries. He was only twenty-eight years of age when he was called to be the Superior of the house at Pagani; and in 1750, after the death of Father Sportelli, St. Alphonsus appointed him to be one of the three General-Consultors.

All the virtues of a religious shone brilliantly in Father Fiocchi. But he distinguished himself above all by his fervor in prayer, his spirit of mortification, his love for Mary Immaculate and for his devotion to our Blessed Mother of the Seven Dolors. Then the love that he felt for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament was without a parallel: when he offered the Holy Sacrifice he resembled a seraph. This worthy son of St. Alphonsus went to his eternal repose in 1776, while sweetly invoking the name of Mary. Four years after his death his body was found incorrupt.

Bishop] of Avellino. And then in Avellino itself, that is, in the diocese of this name, we should have to proceed to Villamaiana and S. Stefano.

We shall have to repair to Trevico and Flumari, which have also been promised. Take as many subjects as you can from Caposele and Iliceto, and I will send you others from this place; you most divide them between Trevico and Flumari, since the spring is short. You must, therefore, write at once and appoint the time, so that all may be prepared when you arrive. The first mission will begin in *Dominica in Albis* [Low Sunday]. Give my regards to Don Michelangelo Colabella, and tell him that I have recommended him to the Madonna. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

At Naples I have obtained important favors for the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of Father Francesco Saverio Pecorelli, C. SS. R.

LETTER 149.

To the Novice Pietro Angelo Picone,[1] at Ciorani.

He consoles him and admits him to religious profession.

[The beginning of June, 1753.]

Live Jesus and Mary!

My Son: I have learned from your letter and I had already heard before, that the doctor has said that your

[1] Pietro Picone, cousin of Father Carmine Picone, born May 24, 1733 and admitted to the novitiate June 21, 1752, fell ill during the last months of his novitiate. The malady appearing serious, the Superiors wished to send him for some time to Manicalciati, his native place. This determination was the occasion of great sadness

native air may do you good, and I have acquiesced in the desire that you have in regard to your health. For the rest, you have not given me any cause for complaint, and since you do not care about going to your native country, I am satisfied if you go for a change of air to any one of our houses. I have already ordered that you should be sent to our house at Caposele whence if the air does you no good you may pass to the house of Iliceto; and I desire nevertheless (tell them about it) that about July or August they may allow you to take the waters of Monticchio. I am moreover satisfied that on the feast of St. Louis you should make the vows, since you so ardently desire to do so. You see now whether I wish to drive you out of the Congregation.

During your illness do not apply yourself much to study. Take care of your health, go out walking in the mornings, do what the doctor says, and pray every day for me. I will not make you stay either here or at Ciorani, because the air of these two places has not benefited you. Let us see what other climates will do for you. Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

to the pious youth, since this departure for home had the appearance of dismissal from the Congregation. He therefore wrote a long letter to the holy founder, entreating him not to send him away from the house of God. The saint sent him the foregoing letter. Pietro Picone made his profession in the presence of Father Paolo Cafaro at Caposele, on the day indicated in the answer of St. Alphonsus, and died a holy death in the same house at Caposele, in the month of November of the following year.

LETTER 150.

To a Superior of the Congregation.

Change of abode of two subjects.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

June 25....

Write to Signor Nicola Santoriello at Caposele and ask him to send to Iliceto the young tailor Nicola, as I learn that he has recovered. Then write to Iliceto that they should send to Pagani either Nicola or Brother Romualdo, whichever of the two needs most to go there for his health. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa! I remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 151.

To Mother Angiola of Divine Love,[1] a Carmelite at Capua.

He asks her to use her influence with the Queen of Naples to obtain the approbation of the Institute of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, July 4, [1753].

I have received your most esteemed favor, and I first thank you for the remembrance that you have kept of me, and then for the recommendations that you have made for me. You are right, my dear Mother; it is not prudent to present the Brief if circumstances are not favorable.

I have suffered from pains of the body, especially from headache; yet I have never forgotten to recommend you

[1] Mother Angiola, the penitent of the saint in the world, had founded the reformed Carmelite convent at Capua. The Queen of Naples, Maria Amalia Walburga, frequented this convent and expressed a great regard for the saintly foundress.

every day at Mass. On your part, I beg you, continue to recommend me to our Lord that he may make me entirely his. That is the important thing. For the rest, and in regard to the approbation, God will provide.

However, my dear Mother, when the Queen arrives at Caserta, do not forget what I wrote to you in my last letter.

The whole difficulty rests upon the acquisition of property. His Majesty the king may do in regard to this whatever he wishes; we shall accept anything. If the king wishes that we should never be allowed to possess anything and that the bishop should only be permitted to furnish us with some alms, he has but to command, and we will obey. It is sufficient that he gives us the approbation and that he does not thus leave us in suspense. If the king knew that we were making this proposition, I believe that he would be appeased, seeing that we do not wish to possess anything. But who will make this proposition to him? If I could speak to him, I would do so; but the king grants no audience. I have tried to have an interview, and the thing was impossible. But the Queen can speak to him if she wishes. Enough. When the moment comes I beg you to submit to the Queen this proposition.

I continue to hope, my dear Mother, that our dear Lord will use your intervention to establish this work destined to save so many abandoned souls. Who knows whether God has not disposed this favor of the Queen not only for the benefit of your reform, but also for the success of all that is undertaken for his glory! However, if you think that the glory of God is not concerned in our approbation, I will not ask that you should any more speak of this affair. Now I think, and I always say, that the Lord wishes to mortify my pride, and that this approbation will not be obtained before my death. *Dominus est: quod est bonum in oculis suis, hoc faciat.* [It is the Lord: let him do what

is good in his sight. — 1 *Kings*, iii. 18.] May Jesus and Mary not cease to diffuse over us their blessings.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 152.

To Sister Anna Camilla de' Leoni, in the Monastery of the Most Holy Saviour at Ariano.

He exhorts her to bear her interior trials courageously, and writes out for her a rule of conduct.

NOCERA, July 5, 1753.

Modicæ fidei, quæ dubitasti? [O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt? — *Matt.* xiv. 31.] It is nothing, it is nothing, it is nothing. I even assure you that God loves you now more tenderly than ever. You fear on account of the things about which you speak to me; and I fear that the Lord, to punish your pusillanimity, will not make the trial cease to which he has put you in order to make you entirely his. I assure you on my conscience that you are in favor with God, you love God and God loves you. If you could see, while you are reading my letter, the love which he who is the infinite Good bears you, you would die with joy.

I see from the tone of your letter that God in his goodness wishes to raise you to a sublime state of love. Do not place any obstacle in the way. And do not believe that the obstacle comes from the multitude of sins which frighten you, as you say, and which you call the sins of hatred of God and of the Sisters who speak of God, the displeasure of being a Christian, the desire of being damned, the wish of calling the devil to your aid. Do not positively make any account of those thoughts, desires, temptations against

faith or against any other matter; do not by any means confess them, and always receive Communion, notwithstanding all those incitements to despair, and however horrible may appear to you those desires; for in all this you commit no fault. If you had not committed any sins in the past, you would be at this moment as innocent as a child. In order to commit a sin there must be full pleasure and the full consent of the will; you, on the contrary, detest these things, although the darkness, the trouble, and the aridity in which you are make you believe that you are giving consent. The obstacle which in my opinion you can put in the way of your spiritual progress is your importunity in praying to God to deliver you from these troubles. You do not feel the love of God; but thank God that you have it; if you did not possess it, God would not make you feel the pain that you have, I wish to say, the fear in which you now are of offending him or of having lost his friendship. The more desperate you feel, the greater confidence you should have. Honor this infinite Goodness by taking as the measure of your confidence in him the greatness of the chastisements of which you acknowledge yourself to be worthy. *Nullus speravit in Domino, et confusus est.* [No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded. — *Ecclus.* ii. 11.]

I send you this little work. Keep a copy of it for yourself; give one to the abbess; put another in the choir for any one that may wish to read it. Read a little every day out of this book. But let us proceed to what you should do in the state in which you are.

First, humble yourself before God, and acknowledge yourself worthy of every chastisement. Then, as I have told you, far from asking to get rid of this state, offer yourself to remain therein your whole life and through all eternity if so God wills. Ask him only to help you to avoid every fault, particularly tedium and little resignation to the divine will.

Cast yourself like one that is dead into the amiable embrace of Jesus, your Redeemer, by assuring him unceasingly that he can do with you what he pleases, provided you love him and are pleasing to him. Say to him: O Lord, here I am! I no longer belong to myself, I belong to Thee; do with me as Thou wishest. I care not for pains, provided they procure Thy glory. I do not desire consolations; it suffices if I belong to Thee and love Thee. Then, rejoice and be consoled by remembering that the infinite Good, the object of your love, is infinitely happy.

Secondly, while in this state guard against giving up your exercises, and particularly Communion. Even ask your confessor, under the pretext of making some novenas, to increase if possible the number of your Communions while you are under this trial. As for the apprehensions of which I have spoken, namely, the hatred of God, despair, incredulity, etc., do not confess them. And when you call upon your confessor, let not this be in order to seek for consolations, but only to obtain strength in your trials. In the state in which you are, take care to obey punctually, and show the same obedience to the Superiors of the monastery. In this kind of trial all must be done forcibly and against one's will; but *in this is found the good pleasure of God.*

Thirdly, have recourse to the comforter of the afflicted, the Blessed Virgin by saying to her: My good Mother, have pity on me! As for prayer and thanksgiving after Communion, do not trouble yourself if you find yourself distracted, sick and tired, and if you think that by your thoughts you are displeasing God rather than pleasing him. It suffices that you simply say from time to time: My God, my Jesus, it is Thee alone whom I wish, and nothing more. And it is sufficient if you say this with the superior part of the will, without any sentiment; say it by the glance

of the eye at the crucifix, at heaven, or at the Blessed Sacrament; and that will be sufficient.

Fourthly, do violence to yourself so that you may not show melancholy in the presence of the Sisters. Try to appear joyful as much as possible, and be obliging to every one; and if some impatient words should escape you, do not trouble yourself; for in the state in which you are God will have greater compassion on you.

In the midst of these trials, recommend my poor soul to Jesus Christ, for these trials render you dearer to his heart, and he most willingly hears your prayers. Courage! be without fear. God wishes you all to himself.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 153.

To the Master of Novices.

He should employ kindness and discretion towards the novices.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I beg you to treat N. with great kindness. He must remain in the novitiate like a novice; but he must accuse himself with the other professed. Tell him that he is a member of the Congregation, because this is a sore temptation to him. Endeavor to encourage him.

Now that the hot weather is coming, moderate the exercises of the novices; let them go out often and diminish their application; for we see how all become ill. Let them gradually copy the exercises of the missions, and see to it

that they learn by heart at least two or three exhortations. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 154.

To Father Andrea Villani, Rector of the House at Ciorani.

The saint acquaints him with the serious illness of Father Paolo Cafaro, and asks his prayers for the latter's recovery.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, August 5, [1753].

Gloria Patri! Father Paolo Cafaro is very ill. Read this letter and return it to me. There is great need of fervent prayer. I have asked for prayers at Scala and at all the monasteries of this part of the country. You and all the others will please say ten Masses for Father Paolo; I shall do the same here; begin a novena with a litany. Please say for nine evenings three times the *Our Father*, the *Hail Mary* and *Gloria Patri*, in honor of the Most Holy Trinity for the favors granted to the archpriest of Ripacandida,[1] and to solicit the recovery of the sick man through the merits of this servant of God. Please send immediately the same request for prayers to the monasteries of Solofra, Saragnano, S. Giorgio, and Penta, as soon as you can do so conveniently, but it would please me very much if you wrote to Solofra immediately.

Write to Iliceto to tell them to begin the novena together

[1] Don Giambattista Rossi, archpriest of Ripacandida and founder of the discalced Carmelites there, died with the reputation of a saint, in the fifty-sixth year of his age, in the year 1746. Many miracles were wrought through his intercession. The Life of this great servant was printed in the year 1752 and dedicated to His Holiness, Benedict XIV. One of the sisters of Rossi lived at Pescopagano; and for this reason, St. Alphonsus in the following letter advises Father Giovenale to seek for relics of Don Rossi at Ripacandida.

with the ten Masses; let them make the novena also for [Marquis] Brancone.

I wish you could come here to-morrow, or Wednesday or Thursday, to settle several points.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After a copy.

LETTER 155.

To Father Francesco Giovenale,[1] Minister of the House at Caposele.

Prayers prescribed for the recovery of Father Cafaro. — Triple obedience imposed on the sick man.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, August 6, [1753].

May God be ever blessed and may his holy will be done! You did well in sending for Cappuccio[2] and also for Boegio.[3] This sickness is probably a coagulation of blood and the effect of an epidemic that is perhaps prevalent among you; hence I think a cold water treatment would be beneficial. For the rest, I frankly admit, I am not a doctor. The illness is becoming very serious. Prayers are needed. I have already requested prayers to be said at the convent at Scala and at different monasteries of the neighborhood. Please ask the monastery and the town of Calitri to say the litanies of the Madonna; you might also ask at Guardia and at Pescopagano, where Father Paolo [Cafaro] lately

[1] Father D. Francesco Giovenale, born at Lacedogna, February 6, 1719, entered the Congregation in 1747, and after a virtuous life died at S. Angelo a Cupolo, June 16, 1782.

[2] The archpriest of Lacedogna Don Domenico Antonio Cappuccio was from the year 1748 one of the penitents of Father Cafaro.

[3] Another penitent of Father Cafaro.

gave missions. Besides the novena to the Madonna (which you are to say also for Marquis Brancone, as I promised him) you will also say ten Masses for Don Paolo's recovery; I have ordered the other houses to do the same; and during nine days, recite three times the *Our Father*, *Hail Mary*, and *Gloria Patri* in honor of the Most Holy Trinity, in order that Father Paolo may receive his health through the merits of the archpriest of Ripacandida, Giambattista Rossi, who works so many miracles. If perhaps you have some relic of this holy priest, apply it to the sick man; if you have none, try to procure one at Pescopagano.

As for Father Paolo, as soon as he has recovered from his stupor, please read to him these three points which I give him:

"I, Alfonso, as your Superior, taking the place of Jesus Christ, give you the obedience and command you to calm yourself and to believe with all confidence that you are in the state of grace, and that God in his infinite Goodness loves you dearly. If the Lord calls you to the other life, do not forget to recommend to him the Congregation and my own miserable self.

"In the second place, I command you to ask from God your cure, if it be for his glory, in order that you may serve him with greater fervor and zeal.

"In the third place, I give you the obedience from our Most Holy Redeemer to get well if it be for the glory of God."

This is for Father Paolo.

I am writing to-day to Naples and am telling Father Margotta to go to your house.

I should gladly send Father Mazzini but I will not do so, for I fear the epidemic which I think is at present prevalent there. It is not good to risk the life of this good Father, who God knows is in a poor condition and is using remedies.

Please tell Father Paolo when he is well to let me know

what he saw and heard in that dream of which Father Picone spoke.

You may easily imagine the affliction in which we are; hence I ask you to let me know how Father Paolo is getting along after the obedience that I have given him.

You and all should earnestly pray to Jesus Christ and to our Mother Mary; say the litanies in the church, morning and evening.

I bless you all; let us resign ourselves entirely to the will of God, if we wish to obtain graces.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 156.

To Father Francesco Margotta, at Naples.

He informs Father Margotta of Father Cafaro's illness. — He asks him to return to Caposele.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, August 6, [1753].

Blessed be God forever! We are plunged into new afflictions. A messenger came yesterday from Caposele with the sad news that Father Cafaro has a very malignant fever accompanied by a certain stupor, so that they were obliged on the second day of the attack to blister him. They wrote to me that they would like to have your Reverence return to them. I say that you *for the present* may regulate your movements according to the business that you have in hand.[1]

1 Father Margotta as Procurator-General of the Congregation spent the greater part of his time at Naples, to transact the affairs of the Institute.

I say, *for the present*, for if Father Paolo grows worse, it will be necessary for you to go to Caposele.

Let the Brother [Francesco Tartaglione] take with him to Don Giovanni Oliviero the enclosed fifteen ducats which I am sending him.

May the divine will be ever done! Judge how much concerned we are for Father Paolo. Pray and have all prayers possible said in one or the other monastery.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of the priest D. Antonio d' Amico at Molina di Vietri in the diocese of Cava.

LETTER 157.

To Father Francesco Giovenale.

Recommendation in regard to Father Cafaro's illness.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

[NOCERA], August 9, [1753].

May God's will be always done! If God calls Father Paolo to himself you will have to govern the house, and in the mean time I shall be thinking of sending you another Rector.

If Father Paolo should die, put off his funeral oration until we are able to gather from Cava [1] and other places the necessary particulars. However, I have not ceased to place my hope in Mary, my good Mother. I hear that water has been given to him, but I did not yet learn that oil of almonds had been administered to him.

You may imagine how great is our affliction; I am, especially so afflicted, that I have become like one stupefied. Yet I have not lost all hopes that our Mother will leave him among us for the glory of her Son.

[1] Father Cafaro was a native of Cava.

If he dies, tell Apice [1] to send me the particulars that he has gathered. I shall afterwards send him the rest. If the sick man should happen to become better, send me at once a messenger. I bless you all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

If Father Paolo is still alive, tell him from me to hear with submission what I impose on him in the name of obedience; then, whether he regains his senses or not give him the obedience that I have sent you. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 158.

To the Same.

Sentiments of resignation to the will of God inspired by the death of Father Cafaro.[2]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, August 14, [1753].

May the divine will be adored and fulfilled forever! God's will is our will. Father Paolo will assist us more in heaven than on earth. We must now be resigned; God wishes this of us, and we must obey.

You may bury him apart from the other graves; you

1 Father Bernardo Apice.

2 Father Paolo Cafaro, born at Cava July 5, 1707, was admitted to religious profession July 2, 1741, and died August 13, 1753. At his death, St. Alphonsus, adoring the divine judgments, expresses the feelings of his heart in a celebrated little hymn on the will of God, that begins with the following words:

Il tuo gusto, e non il mio
Amo solo in te, mio Dio.
Voglio solo, o mio Signore,
Ciò che vuol la tua bontà.
Quanto degna sei d' amore,
O divina Volontà.

may also deliver the funeral sermon if you think fit. Send out invitations that there may be many present. After Father Apice [1] has finished the funeral oration, please send it here that we may also deliver one.

Let your Reverence, as I have already said, act as Superior for the present; I shall send a Rector afterwards. Send me all Father Paolo's manuscripts for safe-keeping. If then you should wish for any one of his sermons, you may write to me and I shall then send it.

As for Father Paolo's picture, if you are not able to procure one that is well done, we have a good one here. We could then take this for a model.

Send me, I repeat, all his manuscripts and memorandum books and a small piece of his habit. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I have already determined the Rector for your house; it is Father Giovanni Mazzini, and God knows what pain it causes me to send him away to please your Archbishop [of Conza]. Now send a Brother with a mule for the journey. Have confidence, great confidence! Father Paolo has to do more for us above than he could do while here

('Tis Thy good pleasure, not my own,
In Thee, my God, I love alone;
And nothing I desire of Thee
But what Thy goodness wills for me.
O will of God! O will divine!
All, all our love be ever Thine.)

In the year 1767, the saint published a short sketch of the life of Father Cafaro.

On the death of Mgr. Falcoia Father Cafaro became the spiritual director of our saint, who, as appears from his *journal*, afterwards asked Father Andrea Villani to fill that position. The words of the *journal* are as follows: "All the obediences given by Father Paolo and by other directors have been confirmed by Father Andrea, this day, August 15, 1753."

[1] The funeral oration by Father Bernardo Apice is preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

below. He has to obtain for us the *exequatur*, but quickly, quickly.

Write me the particulars of his death; let Father Apice send me a detailed account. I embrace you all in Jesus Christ, hoping that you may all die as Father Paolo died. Now let us become saints, let us observe the Rule strictly. These deaths are warnings for us. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of the priest Don Francesco Apice.

LETTER 159.

To the Same.

He should govern the Community at Caposele till the arrival of the new Rector. — Various measures.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, August 21, [1753].

I have been wishing to send Father Giovanni [Mazzini]; but the news spread in regard to your surroundings is so frightful that I cannot make up my mind to expose this excellent subject to any dangers.

I have received the manuscripts, but I regret that the *instructions* on the virtues have been lost. See whether some one has them, and try to recover the instructions given at Melfi.

In the mean time do the best you can, and when all danger is over and there is no suspicion of it, you may send for Father Giovanni.

As for the picture, we shall have it made.

Your Reverence may keep Father Paolo's crucifix, *donec aliter provideatur* [till otherwise provided.]

See to it that regular observance be maintained: exhort,

beg, but do not give penances, unless it be to the lay-brothers.

As for Brother Nicola, we must think of sending him elsewhere. Here his health has been worse; he will at your house breathe the air of his native place. If it is God's will to call him to himself, let us be resigned; but make him take the necessary remedies, such as, milk, broth, etc.

In regard to the sermons that you wish to have, we shall speak of them afterwards.[1]

Tell Father Apice that he should have patience; we shall return the manuscript. But to hear him say: *It must be finished promptly, at once, on the same day; one should write while the other is dictating;* this is indeed a fine thing! or rather fine vanity! — All this in order that the manuscript might be read and copied by the admirers at your place so that the balloon may become more inflated![2]

I am told that the Archbishop [di Conza] was displeased because I used my influence in procuring a bishopric for his Vicar-General. I did not think that this would be the case, nor did I suspect that I would thereby cause him displeasure. Henceforward I will never interfere in such things.

Have the enclosed letter forwarded to Muro as soon as possible and cautiously; so that it may not be lost and may arrive safely. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Have the whole Community recommend to God the brother of the archpriest of Teora. Live Jesus and Mary!

When the young man Francesco Antonio de Paola [3]

[1] Very likely he refers to the sermons preached about the deceased Father Paolo Cafaro.

[2] Father Apice had composed a funeral oration on Father Cafaro, and his oration had been sent to Nocera to furnish notes for Father Alessandro de Meo who likewise pronounced a funeral oration on the deceased, August 30, in our church at Pagani.

[3] This young man, a native of Ruvo, diocese of Muro, became later on (1781) Superior-General of the Congregation in the Pontifical States.

comes, receive him kindly and send him here at once if he can come. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

(*Postcript written by another hand*): Our Father wishes to add here, that when you send the riding animals to take Father Giovanni and the goods that have come from Naples, send them laden with good grain; of this arrangement Father Apice has been informed.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 160.

To Father Francesco Margotta, Procurator-General of the Congregation at Naples.

Solicitude of the saint in regard to the health of the subjects. — Details as to temporal affairs,

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, 31, [August, 1753].

How can I permit Father [Francesco] Garzilli to go to Caposele when I have been informed by letter that Father Buonamano is suffering from a fever like that of Father Paolo?

As for Gaetano d' Ischia, it would not be well to think of sending him thither. I await a list of the books for the exercises.

With regard to the purchase of investments, thus much is certain: you cannot now leave Naples. The purchase of investments in tobacco seems to me about the best bargain; but I fear after what I heard, the four per cents do not offer entire security. I think the investments in the fief is also good. Before investing in houses, it would be well to see what will be the income. As for the Carmelites, it is certain that they will return the money in a few years: add to this that Don Bernardo is rightly in their favor.

Now I receive from Caposele another letter apprising me that Father Picone has also been attacked by fever, and that to the fever with which Father Buonamano is afflicted a very severe headache has supervened. I also hear that the mortality is still very great at Apulia. I therefore would not dare to send Father Lorenzo d' Antonio to Iliceto. I remain, etc. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

If you ever have to give a novena to the children of the Congregation of Borgia,[1] I should be pleased, and I give you my blessing. Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of Sister Maria Crocifissa Berlingieri, a nun in the convent of S. Chiara at Naples.

LETTER 161.

To the Same.

Details relative to temporal affairs, to the mission at Calabria and to various subjects.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, September 2, [1753].

As for those books of exercises, by Maffei and Muratori, we already have them. Please send me that work of Father Barbugli[2] and let me know the price of it; but look out for some other works.

About the purchase of tobacco, three and six *carlini*

1 This Congregation was called *Ritiro delle Vergini dell' Immacolata Concezione e di S. Vincenzo.* (Asylum of the orphans of the Immaculate Conception of St. Vincent de Paul.) It was built under the direction of Cardinal Spinelli, who committed the care of it to Canon Nicola Borgia, later on (that is in 1751) Bishop of Cava. About 500 young girls found shelter in this retreat.

2 Demetrio Barbugli, S. J., has written among other works "Spiritual Readings for the Use of Nuns, or Commentary on Some Passages of St. Bernard."

would be suitable prices. As for the purchase of the fief it is a wearisome thing to be obliged to quarrel with powerful people about boundary lines; in the course of time they take everything from you little by little.

About the chaplaincy, *bene provisum* [you have well provided for it]. Your Reverence thinks only of Caposele. [1] Why does not some one think of the afflicted house at Nocera which has nothing? But enough of this; do the best you can. Please however do not let the chaplaincy bear our name, as that is now forbidden by the king. [2] You can leave it to the archbishop that he may have us to say Masses and that he give us the revenues of the benefice, or you can leave it to the church of *Mater Domini* by founding the chaplaincy there. Enough on this point; take the best measures that you can in order that we may not get into trouble with the royal treasury.

I do not care too much about accepting the annual income of thirty ducats in favor of a mission for the village of Solopaca; but poverty forces us to accept it for the present. See whether you could arrange for a mission every five or at least every four years.

Our Frater [Pietro Paolo] Blasucci is already of age required for the priesthood; hence he could be ordained at Christmas; but the consent of the Bishop of Muro is necessary. I hear that the bishop is at present at Naples. Try to find him and ask his permission.

It is not possible to give now the mission in Calabria you know how many subjects we have lost. Next year the young men who are now studying Moral Theology will finish their course, and then we can oblige our *friend*. [3]

1 Father Margotta being a native of the diocese of Conza was inclined to leave his patrimony to the house at Caposele.

2 The Congregation had not been recognized as an ecclesiastical corporation; and could not therefore acquire any property.

3 This friend was Carmine Ventapane of Maratea, in the diocese

But I will not have a mission given in Calabria without one of these two conditions: either a foundation is to be established; and for that our friend would have to have an understanding with the bishop, and the bishop should express his desire to the king of uniting at his expense some missionaries in one of his houses; or there must be a legacy of two thousand ducats. But then everything that we wish to have done must be exactly determined; if, for example, it is desirable to have every four or five years missions lasting two or three months. But if our ministry should be required every year, or if we should be asked that within the space of five years all the places in the diocese be evangelized, such a thing would not be possible. There is question of seven or eight days to be devoted to travelling.

I have received Monsignor Bonaventura's [1] letter, and give you my blessing for the instructions that you are going to give at the Conservatory of Father Pepe.

As you have already bought the works of St. Peter Damian, leave them for the house at Caposele; but they are not of much value.[2] It would have been much better if you could have bought the works of St. Thomas of Villanova, which are very fine.

Yes, tell Signor Cestoni that I shall not have any more *Visits* printed on my account, but shall get them from him.

of Cassano, and was one of the ablest professors of medical science at Naples. He was very zealous and at the same time wealthy. Having seen with his own eyes the spiritual abandonment of the people of Calabria, he resolved to have missions given there at his own expense, and for this purpose he applied to St. Alphonsus and to Father Margotta. And in fact, when everything had been arranged, the missions began in November 1756.

1 Francesco Antonio Bonaventura, born at Barletta, was a great friend of St. Alphonsus. A man of great piety and learning, he was preconized bishop of Nusco, November 26, 1753, and he governed his diocese up to the year 1788.

2 No doubt the saint evidently meant that they were not of much value in regard to their practical utility for missions.

However I have asked him to give me a copy of his edition to revise it; it is full of faults. Hence if he intends to print any more, I would wish to revise the edition; I shall take copies from him, after I have disposed of my own, which are not many.

Let me know the *authors of the exercises* which you have found.

Try to find out whether the sixth volume of Tournely's Moral Theology has been published; I already have the fifth.

I am sending back Brother Mattia, as I have no other Brother to send you from this place; how could you have got along without a Brother? And then, what necessity is there to send the half-sick Brother [to Caposele], where the pest is raging at present?

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 162.

To Mother Maria Angiola of Divine Love, at Capua.

He begs her to obtain through the Queen the royal approbation of the Institute of the Most Holy Redeemer.

NOCERA, September 8, [1753].

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Now the favorable time has come for you, my dear Mother. In my last letter I asked you to find out whether it were expedient to hand to the Queen before the chase the writing in question; for I feared that amid the distractions of the chase it might be lost. Now I tell you that you should do as you think best; and if you think that you should give the writing before the opening of the chase,

give it. But I again recommend to you to employ on this occasion all the influence that you can exert. Make the Queen especially understand the injury that the want of the approbation has caused us; on the other hand, tell her that we renounce the right of making any acquisition whatever, and that we shall be satisfied with what the king allows us through the hands of the bishops. I also ask you in reference to this matter to read this writing, for everything is there briefly exposed. For the service that you will render me, my dear Mother, it is not I that will reward you, but it will be Jesus Christ himself, whose cause you will plead.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I have conveyed to Marquis Brancone the communication with which you have charged me, and I beg you to recommend me to Jesus Christ.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 163.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce, at Camigliano.

She should not refuse any charge. — Avoid dissipation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, September 30. [1753?]

I answer briefly. As for asking the Prioress that she should not give you employments that may distract you, is something that does not please me; for a religious should neither ask for nor refuse any employment; but when it is given by the Superiors it is God himself who gives it.

In regard to placing into the hands of another religious whatever you have, that would not displease me if you find

one that would desire to charge herself with the care of it. You may, therefore, make an attempt, but without coming to a final decision.

In respect to your feast, what shall I say? I do not like these particular feasts which the religious celebrate. I would advise you to deposit with the Prioress what is to be spent for the feast and to concern yourself about nothing except to praise and to offer prayers to the saint; otherwise you will derive therefrom more disquietude than devotion.

As for your brother, if he comes it will be well. If he does not come, do not take the trouble to have him come; for self-love would have therein a greater share than the love of God.

I recommend you to Jesus Christ; on your part continue always to do so for me, and make a novena to the Blessed Virgin for my Congregation; for we are overwhelmed with trouble, especially now as we are menaced, so they tell me, with a great persecution. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of Sister Maria Alcala, religious in the convent of S. Chiara, at Naples.

LETTER 164.

To Mother Maria Angiola of Divine Love.

He sends her some books. — Hopes in regard to the extension of the Reform of Carmel.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NAPLES, October 6, [1753].

I send you, my dear Mother, my book on the Blessed Virgin with the "Novena to St. Teresa" and the little book of canticles. Please to give the other copy of the "Glories

of Mary" to my dear friend Father A. Pagnani in order that he may not forget me before the Madonna. You yourself, my dear Mother, should take care to recommend me to Jesus Christ after Communion and solicit for me from our heavenly Mother the love for her divine Son. I desire nothing else.

I am glad that the affair of the foundation of your monastery of Gruma has again been brought up for discussion; so I was told at Naples. Your holy Institute will, I hope, extend more and more over Italy and in the whole of Europe, to the glory of the divine Spouse and your divine Mother. Well, now! recommend me with fervor to Jesus Christ, I say *with fervor*, otherwise I shall derive no benefits. Recommend also this Congregation to this divine Master. I will on the other hand pray for yours. May Jesus be our love and Mary be our hope!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer,

After an old copy.

LETTER 165.

To Signora Filippa Farao.

He briefly explains to her the Rules of the Nuns of the Most Holy Redeemer at Scala.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, 29. [1753?]

Your letters are too long. I rejoice that your uncle has consented to send you to Scala; but it seems to me to be difficult for you to attain your end. We must pray much; this is the means of obtaining this grace.

As for the Rules at Scala, a careful search has been made for them, but they have not been found.[1] The fol-

[1] The said Rules were printed at Rome in 1750, after the Institute

lowing is substantially what they contain: Perfect poverty; three hours of silence during the day, after recreation; an hour and a half of meditation; there is but one grate, and for relatives, and conversation is held there with the veils down; spiritual reading etc., and similar things; chemises and bed-sheets are of linen; flesh-meat is eaten, etc. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

For pity's sake, keep secret what I say to you, and destroy my letters. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 166.

To D. Luigi Sagliano.

He begs him recommend to the Queen through Mother Maria Angiola the affair of the approbation of his Institute.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, October 30, [1753].

My dear Don Luigi: I have received your very dear letter and that of Canon Farao whom I am going to answer; I have also received the two catechisms. I am glad that *the house is catching fire.* St. Francis de Sales says that when the house catches fire the furniture is thrown out of the window. He wishes to say that when in a soul the love of God is enkindled, the soul detaches itself and gradually casts off everything that is not God.

I do not forget you in my poor prayers, and you do not forget me. I know not how to prophesy, but it appears to me that God expects great things from you. Well, then,

of the Redemptoristines had been approved by the Holy See. It seems that the copy sent to the saint at Nocera was lost.

I wish that you would help our poor Congregation, and do your share in assisting this great work that will do much for the glory of our Lord.

I intrust a secret to you: When I took leave of Sister Angiola, I also recommended to her our persecuted Congregation, telling her that for four years we had been laboring and had not succeeded in procuring the *exequatur* for the apostolic approbation. I then said to her that she should help us through the Queen; she promised to do so, and now she writes to me that she has not forgotten her promise. This is the favor that I wish you to do for me. When you find out that the Queen is going to Caserta I beg you (excuse the importunity) to go to Sister Maria Angiola on the day before the coming of the Queen, and instruct her on the manner in which she should engage the Queen to interest herself in obtaining for us the royal approbation on which this work depends for its stability; as otherwise it will be of no value. Tell Sister Maria Angiola that I have intrusted this to you as a secret, and you should show her that you are recommending this matter to her, because you are actuated by the desire to have the glory of God made manifest. When the Queen has promised this to Sister Angiola, I shall at once present the Brief and have my memorial referred by Marquis Brancone. But I cannot run the risk of losing the Brief if I am not sure of the promise of the Queen. The whole affair revolves on the acquisition of property. We do not wish riches. We shall be satisfied, if the king approves of the arrangement, that he should restrict us as to our purchases and revenues just as he may think fit; we shall be satisfied with fifteen grains [1] a day for each one, and even less after the manner of servants in livery. We have

[1] A grain is twenty-fourth part of a pennyworth troy; 15 grains are equal to 64 centimes, a centime being about one fifth of a United States cent.

only four houses in each of which there must be twelve Fathers and seven lay-brothers. For this reason has the king assigned to us what will pay for the food, and nothing more.

I would like to have this work established before my death, which is not far off. My dear Luigi, for that which you do I shall not pay you, but Jesus Christ, who loves this work so much. There is question of saving hundreds of thousands of souls, as there is question of restoring every year to the grace of God thirty or forty thousand helpless souls, together with about forty missions, and as many courses of exercises which are given at home.

But if Sister Maria Angiola urges this matter only in a lukewarm manner, and the Queen promises her assistance only in the same way, the whole affair will come to nothing; and I repeat that I shall not take the risk of presenting the Brief. Sister Maria Angiola would have to say to the Queen that God wishes (this is certain) that she should interest herself in establishing this great work and that after God we place all our hope in the Queen. She should tell her that God positively wishes her to put forth every effort in regard to this matter.

My dear D. Luigi: Jesus Christ will repay you for whatever you do in behalf of this work. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa! I remain,

Your very humble and very affectionate servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of Cardinal Guglielmo Sanfelice, Archbishop of Naples.

LETTER 167.

To Mother Angiola of Divine Love.

He again recommends to her the affair of the legal recognition of the Institute.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, November 1, [1753].

I have received your answer. It is too much for you to thank me for those little works. I should like to know how your affairs are, for I have understood that a Theatine came from Rome to examine what is the spirit that guides you. I can do nothing; but occasionally I have tried my best to defend you and your work against certain attacks. Enough; I desire only to know how things are. I have no influence; but I will not omit to promote your work as much as I can for the glory of God and of our Mother Mary.

Please again remember me kindly to our dear friend Father Pagnani; no doubt I should have been much happier to make his acquaintance than he to make the acquaintance of me, a poor wretch. May it please God to let me see him again; but already the cold weather has set in, and I shall be condemned not to go out any more on account of my sickness of the chest. Perhaps we shall see each other once more before I die. I also desire to know of your spiritual Father what Mgr. Zortù (?) has said about the spirit that is leading you; for I have heard that he did not approve it, but I do not know on what point. If I desire to know all, it is only for the glory of God.

Well! let us become saints, and do not forget to cast, at least once a day, a look upon the Blessed Sacrament for me and for our poor and afflicted Congregation. You have consoled me by saying that you have recommended the Congregation to God, and that you have reflected on the

means of assuring its future. Now I would say to you, and it is the Lord that gives me this hope, that I count on seeing, before I die, this work definitively established, and this thanks to the Most Blessed Virgin, and, then, to your own self. But if you do not speak strongly to the Queen; if you do not tell her that in order to please God she should certainly occupy herself zealously in regard to the future of this Congregation, we shall not succeed. For my part, without the formal assurance of the efficacious concurrence of the Queen, I would not expose the Brief from Rome to fall into the hands of the ministers, for they would surely declare themselves against me. I have already told you, my dear Mother, that we are not anxious to be rich; let the king assign to us what he wishes for the benefit of our four houses. We are satisfied if he gives us each fifteen grains a day, and if he grants us his approbation. Our Congregation will then not be hanging so to speak in the air, and what good it does for so many souls, everybody knows. There is here question of restoring to the grace of God every year from thirty to forty thousand persons by means of forty missions that we annually give. This being the case, may God provide! My hopes and those of my companions to whom I have confided the affair under a secret, rest, I repeat, first on the Blessed Virgin, then upon you, my dear Mother.

May Jesus bless you, and may he grant you the only thing that is necessary, namely, his holy love. I remain, etc.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Be so kind, my dear Mother, after you have spoken to the Queen, not to wait for Don Luigi [Sagliano] or his servant; but write to me at once by post, addressing the letter to Nocera de' Pagani. If God blesses your interview with the Queen, let me know whether you wish to have the memorial or only an abridgment of it, in order to give it

or send it to the the Queen. It will suffice for her to express the desire to have the memorial to give it to Marquis Brancone, or for her to say to the latter that he should propose the affair to the Council in her presence. Pardon me for my importunity, but there is here question of the glory of Jesus Christ and of the salvation of innumerable thousands of souls, and of abandoned souls. You love our Lord, my dear Mother; you will therefore willingly render this service. Our Lord will not forget it; he will know how to reward you for the part that you will have in the good that will be done by our Congregation till the day of judgment; to which day I hope this Congregation will continue if now you will labor to establish it. Live Jesus and Mary!

For pity's sake, let me occasionally enjoy the pleasure of receiving a letter from you; I shall be satisfied with one line, it will prove that you have not forgotten us. Live Jesus and Mary!

I have the honor to be, my dear Mother,

your very humble servant, once your spiritual Father,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

Letter of the Sovereign Pontiff Benedict XIV. to St. Alphonsus.

[November 2, 1753.]

Benedict XIV., Pope

To our beloved Son, health, and apostolic benediction.

We have received the first volume of the *Moral Theology* [1] dedicated to us; we thank you for the honor that you have paid us and for the opportune insertion of our encyclical Letters in the above-mentioned work. We assure you that

[1] The first volume of the second edition, begun in Naples in 1752 and finished in 1755.

the work will be read by us on opportune occasions, as we have a due estimate of your merit, your diligence and your prudence in your judgments. In regard to the state of your Congregation,[1] we can do nothing more than pray to the Lord and recommend to others that they should pray for the prosperity of your Institute, which is so useful to the Church of God. We conclude by giving you and all the members of your Congregation the apostolic blessing.

Given at Rome, at St. Maria Major, the second day of November 1753, in the fourteenth year of our Pontificate.

LETTER 168.

To Father Andrea Villani.

Solution of a difficulty.

[Anno 1753?]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Don Gennaro Farina[2] wishes to go on the mission. I should have no difficulty about allowing this, but one thing embarrasses me, and that is, that Genovese and Tortora[3] might complain that we accept Farina's services, while we refuse theirs. However, you can say that he is not a professed member, as they once were.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO.

After the original in possession of D. Merolla at Alife.

[1] The saint had asked the Pope to interpose his mediation with the civil authorities, in order to obtain the *exequatur* of the apostolic Brief by which our Congregation had been approved.

[2] The priest Don Gennaro Farina had left the novitiate after receiving a most tender letter from his mother.

[3] Don Pietro Genovese and Don Bernardo Tortora had left the Congregation after their profession.

LETTER 169.

To Sister Maria di Gesù, a Carmelite at Ripacandida.

He recommends to her prayers the Congregation and himself.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, December 4, [1753].

I have received your letter, and I thank you much for the charity that you have in recommending me to Jesus Christ; I do the same for you. At the present time please to pray in a particular manner for our Congregation; for there is question of obtaining its approval by the government, and if we fail this time, God knows when the question will again come up. But may the will of God always be done!

In your fears always throw yourself as if you were quite dead into the lovely arms of Jesus Christ and of his very holy Mother. Think no longer of your past faults; when doubt and mistrust attack you, say resolutely: *In te, Domine, speravi, non confundar in æternum.* [In Thee, O Lord! I have hoped; I shall not be confounded forever.]

As for seeing each other here below, I do not know whether that will ever happen; it may happen, and perhaps not. I am old and infirm; it will be difficult for me to make so long a journey. At present I hardly ever leave the house as I am often visited by fever. It is necessary that I should prepare myself better for death, which must be near; help me, therefore, to prepare myself for the day of reckoning. Be so kind as to offer for me this special prayer, namely, that Jesus Christ may let me know during these last days of my life what I have to do to please him, and that he may give me the strength to execute it. Do not forget this.

Present my regards to the Prioress[1] and to all my Sisters; for I acknowledge them as such. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 170.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce.

One must perform the duties of the offices imposed by obedience.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

December 4. [1753?]

To think of leading a solitary life at Caserta is something unreasonable. Now that you are a religious, you must occupy yourself in the employments that are given to you, and you must serve the Community.

As for other things, you must leave all when you have duties to perform; but when you are free, do not fail to make your day of retreat and to attend to the other exercises of meditation; and once every month, or on the day of the retreat, ask the Prioress to appoint a substitute for you, if such a thing is possible. Pray for me. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

[1] In the month of May, 1753, Mother Maria di Gesù was relieved of the office of Prioress, having been succeeded by Sister Maria of the Holy Ghost.

LETTER 171.

To the Same.

Prohibition to change her convent. — Counsels in regard to patience.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, December 12. [1753?]

Herewith I answer your last letter. The thought that you have of changing your convent is a temptation of the devil, who will always keep you in uneasiness and will never allow you to do anything good. If this temptation returns, I command you to banish it, and to say then: I wish to die here, because God as well as obedience wishes this. Crosses are found everywhere; if you take into your head to go to San Gaudioso [1] you will find there other crosses than those that you have now to bear.

Continue as I have told you to receive holy Communion, to pray, to perform all the mortifications that you can, and above all, bear contradictions that prove what you are; if you are quite resigned to bear these trials by conforming to the will of God, you will not think of changing your convent.

Continue to pray for me and for our Congregation, as there is now question of a most important affair. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

ALFONSO.

After an old copy.

[1] A convent at Naples.

LETTER 172.

To Don Luigi Sagliano.

Exhortation to love Jesus Christ. — He sends him various little works.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, December 19, [1753].

My dear Don Luigi: I know not how to thank you for the great charity that you have shown me; I am praying to Jesus Christ, and I am praying to him with all my heart that he should reward you. As long as the Prioress [Mother Angiola] has the desire to render the service as she should, I do not very much care if I must wait as long as it is necessary; but not so long that it will never be rendered.

Enough on this point; at the favorable moment recall the affair to her memory.

In regard to the persecutions which you mention to me, on the one hand they afflict me, on the other they console me when I see how the Lord is detaching you from the world, and weaning you entirely from it. In the same way the Lord has cut me loose from the world, and now I find myself more content than if I had been made king of the whole world.

How much am I pleased that you take delight in meditating on the love that Jesus Christ bears towards us! I therefore send you another little book by Father Nepveu, who treats in a heavenly manner of the love of Jesus Christ; and truly this sweet Saviour deserves to be loved by us. Continue, therefore, to meditate upon his love; because whoever reflects upon it cannot help loving this good Master and to do everything that will give him pleasure.

Inform me at once whenever there is anything new, and I remain,

Your very humble and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] I have not omitted, and I will not omit to pray for you, and you must also pray for me. I shall be delighted to have you come to make the exercises at our house at Ciorani when they are given to seculars. I am sure that you will derive consolation from them. These exercises for seculars are usually made in Lent. You have time to think of the matter. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

I send you also another little book about the eternal maxims, with some beautiful considerations for devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the original in possession of the Sagliano family at Aversa.

LETTER 173.

To the Same.

He exhorts him to make a retreat.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Teresa!

NOCERA, March 4, 1754.

My dear Don Luigi: I am writing you by another hand, because I am in bed, and have been sick for many days. I again thank you for the charity that you have done me in regard to the Mother Prioress, we shall wait to see what she will do.

I am glad to hear about your new business enterprises as they concern the body. But as to the spiritual part I know not whether I should be glad, because I see that this year they have deprived you of the exercises of Passion week about which I sent you word.

My dear Luigi; — I do not oblige you to come precisely

to Ciorani, but I recommend this most strongly. Every year lay aside all business and do not omit to devote yourself for eight days to the exercises if you wish to acquire the true spirit. *Dedimus corpori annum, demus animæ dies.* [We have given a year to the body, let us give days to the soul.] Let me know whether the Mother Prioress has been successful, and if she has been so, may she be a saint! Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Believe me,

Your very humble and very devoted servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of his Eminence Cardinal Guglielmo Sanfelice, Archbishop of Naples.

LETTER 174.

To Mother Maria di Gesù, at Ripacandida.

Exhortation to obedience and to confidence in God.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, March 24, [1754].

I have been sick for some time, and at present I am not yet free from my trouble.

I have received your letter, and I am happy that the direction of Father Fiocchi has helped you to find peace. Continue then to obey; throw yourself into the arms of the divine Goodness, and go ahead.

You would like to be absolutely without any fear; if this were your state, it would be a sign that you are walking on the wrong road. I then repeat: obey, and move onward in the midst of darkness without knowing whither you are going.

Mauriccio is doing well and is becoming a saint; Mi-

chele [1] is also doing well, but his health is not good. If he so continues, I think of sending him for a while to Melfi to recover his health; he will return immediately after his recovery. It is a long time since I have heard any news from Don Luigi Mercante,[2] as he has not written to me for some time. He has very likely grown cold. Try to write him a strong letter, and make him have a lively fear of the misfortune of losing his vocation.

Recommend every day me and Father Carmine [Fiocchi] to Jesus Christ; I am doing so for you.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After an old copy.

LETTER 175.

To Sister Giovanna Della Croce, at Camigliano.

She should not desire to change her convent. — Various counsels in regard to perfection.

NOCERA, April. [1754?]

I went to Capua on account of a very important affair, [3] and I could not go to Camigliano, as I was travelling with a friend. I must tell you that I have nearly always been unwell, and moreover, that if I had gone to see you, I would have told you what I am now writing to you.

I answer your last letter. It is regrettable that you have not received my letter; in it I said to you that you should positively banish the idea of changing your monastery. At

[1] Mauro Murante and Michele di Michele, both of Melfi, had entered the Congregation by the advice of the Sister.

[2] D. Luigi Mercante, a young man of twenty-eight years of age and already Auditor at the tribunal of Lucera, was a penitent of Father Fiocchi. Sister Maria di Gesù urged him to enter the Congregation; but certain obstacles, unknown to us, prevented the execution of this pious project.

[3] Probably to confer with Mother Angiola del Divino Amore in regard to the affairs of the Congregation.

present I say the same thing to you, and if you ever speak to me again about such an affair, I will no more answer you.

You should become a saint in the place where God wishes you, and not in the place where you wish to go. To wish to change your place of residence is pure self-love and shows the desire of fleeing from the cross. I wish to see you become a saint by bearing with contempt, contradiction, poverty, and all that you have to suffer in the place where you are; you, on the contrary, wish to sanctify yourself in holy solitude.

Even the fact that you reserve for yourself a separate cell does not please me. I wish that, poor as you are, and even poorer than the others, you should be occupied in serving as much as you are able the Community and all the Sisters. For the rest, if you wish to pray, the choir is there; you should go there during the time in which you are not obliged to serve the convent or some Sister, especially any one that is sick.

If you do not positively banish the thought of changing your monastery, you will never become a saint; for this thought nourishes in you distractions and disquietude, and hinders you from loving sufferings, injuries and contempt on the part of others. It is, however, just this love that I wish to see in you.

As for solitude, I wish you to love it, but in the way of which I have spoken. Flee from useless conversation, from the grate as much as possible, and withdraw to the choir, unless you have to render a service to the monastery or to any Sister, even though she may be ungrateful. Such is the life that does not please you, but that pleases Jesus Christ.

Well, then, abstain for a month from every mortification, such as disciplines, little chains, abstinences, etc., and attend only to supporting with patience the contempt, the

contrarieties, and the unpleasantness which you meet with in the monastery. Afterwards you may resume the accustomed mortifications.

You should also mortify the excessive desire of receiving a visit from me. God knows with what haste I departed from Capua. I did not even stay a day at Aversa, notwithstanding the pressing solicitations to stay.

Live Jesus. Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] Give my regards to Signora Camilla Rossi and to her brother.

After the original in possession of D. Giovanni del Vecchio at Naples.

LETTER 176.

To Mgr. Francesco Antonio Bonaventura, Bishop of Nusco.

He excuses himself for having retained two priests for the mission at Amalfi.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, May 18, 1754.

Right Reverend and Dear Sir: On account of the evident necessity of the mission that is given by our Fathers in the populous city of Melfi, I have taken a liberty with your Lordship, through the friendship which I profess for you, of sending thither to assist the Fathers two priests of Cassano,[1] your subjects. They were unwilling to go, since they alleged that by staying so long away from their home they would displease you, and especially since one of them had charge of a confraternity of his place. I have induced them to go thither, making myself responsible to your Lordship for any fault on their part. The reason why I

[1] Cassano Irpino, a place in the diocese of Nusco.

did this was sheer necessity, the other Fathers being engaged in giving other missions. I could not think of employing any other priests than the above-mentioned, as they gave so much edification and satisfaction to our Fathers, and during the time they assisted them they exhibited the highest proofs of their good qualities and their zeal. On this account I hope that your Lordship will pardon my arrogance. Most respectfully kissing your hand, I remain,

Right Reverend Sir,

Your very humble, very devoted,
and very grateful servant,
ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of the Vecchi family at Volturara Irpina.

LETTER 177.

To Father Pasquale Caprioli,[1] at Ciorani.

Solicitude of the saint for the restoration to health of Father D. Saverio Rossi.

[About May 20, 1754.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

Here we are continually saying and reciting litanies for D. Saverio. I am also saying Mass for him. I have promised ten ducats for our altar of Mary Immaculate if she does us this favor. Send me good news to-day. Tell that wretched hiccough on the part of Mary Immaculate to go away at once and not torment any more Don Saverio and us.[2] I feel great compassion for the sick man.

[1] This pious subject, born in Avellino, October 20, 1728, made his profession, May 27, 1751, and after many apostolic labors died the death of the just at Ciorani, January 3, 1813.

[2] It appears that this order was so efficacious that the sick man

When Father Amendolara returns send him to us immediately so that we may send back Father Apice.

Tell Father Caprioli to send me the two other texts.

I bless Don Saverio and all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I send you the two papers; preserve them. I have already sent the act to Don Andrea at Naples. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO.

After an old copy.

was entirely cured. Father Giuseppe Landi thus relates the miracle in his chronicles: "While I was staying at our house at Ciorani, Father Saverio Rossi was lying at this house seriously ill; but as his malady grew worse and the sick man was already given up by the doctors, suffering as he was from a dangerous hiccough, our Father Alfonso who was staying at Nocera de' Pagani, distant about eight miles from Ciorani, wrote every day for information regarding Father Saverio. When I wrote to him that the latter was very ill and that there was but little hope of recovery, he wrote to me that I should tell the sick man that it was his intention that he should get well, and should be cured of his sickness. Through obedience I informed him of this, but D. Saverio grew worse, and I at once informed the saint that all hopes of recovery had banished. Then the saint, full of confidence in God, wrote with his own hand the following words: *My dear Father D. Saverio, I wish that you should get well, and this I command under obedience, and for the love of Jesus Christ and of the Blessed Virgin I command you.* After having received and read this letter, I had not the courage to read it to him; but as Father Andrea Villani, an old Father of great virtue, was staying at the house, I begged him to take it to the sick man and to make known to him the will of our Father. Father Villani having approached the bed of the dying Father said to him: 'Father Saverio, have you faith in obedience?' The latter having answered in the affirmative, Father Villani made known to him the order of our Father Alfonso; the sick man having devoutly kissed the letter, put it under the pillow of his bed, and wonderful to relate! from this time he began to grow better, and in a short while arose from his bed quite restored."

LETTER 178.

To Cardinal Antonino Sersale, Archbishop of Naples.[1]

He humbly exposes to him his views in regard to the state of the diocese of Naples and to the proper measures to be taken to remove certain disorders.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, June 18, 1754.

Most Eminent and Most Reverend Sir: Since my health does not otherwise permit, I wish by writing to you this letter to kiss your Eminence's feet and to express to you my profound respect as your old servant, and now as your subject and son.

It is not necessary for me to express to you the consolation that I felt when I heard that your most worthy person had been chosen to govern the Church of Naples; your Eminence can well imagine this.

But your Eminence will no longer find the Neapolitan clergy as you left it; you will find a ruined clergy,[2] and as a consequence a ruined people. You will especially find a decadence of the right spirit in the candidates for ordination,

[1] Antonino Sersale, born at Sorrento, June 26, 1702, first archbishop of Brindisi, then of Taranto, was created archbishop of Naples, February 16, 1754, then Cardinal with the title of Santa Pudenziana, April 22 of the same year. On the 23d of the said month he took possession of his new church assisted by D. Giulio Niccolò Torni, Archbishop of Arcadiopolis, but he came to his church only on the 16th of the following June. — He died at Naples, June 24, 1775.

[2] The reason of this decadence is well expressed by Canon Sparano in his *Historical Memoires of the Church of Naples* (vol. ii. page 350). "Cardinal Spinelli," he says, "went to Rome at the end of 1749 for the opening of the Holy Year, and remained in this city till he resigned this See, that is, for the space of four years and two months. Ecclesiastical studies began to decay immediately after his departure .... etc."

and also what is worse, you will find the same in the three Congregations of priests.[1] It was by means of these Congregations that there has been preserved during many years the fervor of the Neapolitan clergy, who have been an example to the whole kingdom, and I might say to the entire world; but at present one might shed tears in seeing the state to which they have been reduced.

I hope that Jesus Christ has sent your Eminence to remedy all these evils, and I hope to see renewed the time of St. Charles Borromeo, who preached to the people with so much fruit; in this manner I hope to see your Eminence preach to the people of Naples.

Oh, how much greater are the fruits produced by the words of the Pastor! Your Eminence formerly preached so well as a missionary;[2] now I hope to have the consolation of seeing you preach at Naples as Pastor.

Pardon my boldness, if I speak thus; it is only for the glory of Jesus Christ. What good would your Eminence effect if you would have missions held in Naples, and would yourself preach at least in two or three places, if only during the first years, and would also give the exercises to all the clergy, strongly exhorting them to frequent the Congregations, to observe their Rules, and particularly to apply themselves to the missions, since by the missions from Naples we extend spiritual help to the whole kingdom! As for the candidates for ordination, you should make them understand that they should either give signs of a true vocation or should retire, since the Church deplores

[1] These three Congregations were: 1. The Congregation of the Archiepiscopate, or of the *Propaganda*, or of the *apostolic missions*, erected under the patronage of *Mary Queen of the Apostles;* 2. The Congregation of Father Pavone or the *Conference;* 3. The Congregation of the Purity or of *S. Giorgio*. These three associations are still in existence.

[2] Cardinal Sersale had formerly been a member of the Congregation of the Apostolic Missions.

the ruin caused by admitting many subjects who are without a vocation. Your Eminence might at the same time inform them that you will admit to Holy Orders only those that have been well tried not only as to science, which is of less importance, but as to their moral conduct and as to their ecclesiastical spirit, — things that are most necessary.

I also beg your Eminence to listen to Don Giuseppe Iorio and Don Giov. Battista Fusco,[1] two priests, who are truly men of God and of true zeal, without self-interest. They will represent to you the truth of things, and draw attention to many good works that will be conducive to the welfare of a people that are spiritually ruined. I beg your Eminence at least to listen to them.

I conclude by humbly prostrating myself at your feet, and asking for your blessing. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! I remain,

Your very humble, devoted, and grateful servant and son,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 179.

To Father Antonio Tannoia,[2] Master of Novices at Ciorani.

He regulates the studies of some novices.

[The year 1754.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Who has ever said that the novices have to study during three hours? I have not time to answer in regard to all

[1] D. Giuseppe Iorio and D. Giambattista Fusco were both members of the Congregation of the Archiepiscopate. The former is the author of the famous work "Il Vescovo consolato," and of many other works. Sparano pronounces a most beautiful eulogy on Don Fusco in his *Memorie Istoriche*, tom. ii. pag. 374.

[2] A large volume would be needed in which to narrate the life of this learned and exemplary religious. Born at Corato, October

your difficulties, and from afar I cannot arrange things. If I were with you I might adjust everything after having asked certain questions. Besides, I have spoken of the matter continually, supposing that [Frater Girolamo] Ferrazzano had completed the humanities; but I now hear that he has not even finished his course of arithmetic.

As to [Frater Domenico] Caputo, that he has not finished rhetoric does not matter; he will do so afterwards, having already studied logic. As to physics, geometry is not absolutely necessary, nor is it necessary at least in many cases. Caputo is of age and might learn at present some necessary figures. Physics is something not absolutely necessary; it is ornamental not necessary to a priest.

As for [Frater Pasquale] Bianchi, it appears to me that he has already gone through logic. In a short time he will leave the novitiate. But I should like to be there, to speak to Father Spera and settle all difficulties. Hence since the study of physics has been begun, let things take their

26, 1724, Antonio Tannoia made his profession, December 8, 1747, and as soon as he was ordained priest, the office of Master of novices was intrusted to his care, and a short time afterwards he was made Rector of the house at Iliceto. "When I was still a young man" — so he speaks of himself in the process of beatification of St. Alphonsus — "I was so afflicted with a combination of diseases that the first doctors of Naples despaired of my recovery. The servant of God, however, said to me one day: 'Have no fear, you will not die; but you will have to lead a life of great bodily infirmity.' I have lead such a life and I am leading it still, because it is now nearly fifty years that I have felt myself always afflicted by grave maladies; I have expected death every moment, and if I did not die, and if I am to live, my life will be a life of misery and pain, as the servant of God has told me." Thus he spoke in 1796. But notwithstanding these continual and very great sufferings, he lived heroically faithful to all the exercises of piety, to the fatigues of the apostolic ministry, and to study. He wrote several valuable works, and among them the "Life of St. Alphonsus." (3 vols.) He died a holy death at Iliceto, March 12, 1808.

course. But when the young men reach the end of their novitiate, inform me, and we shall see what is to be done.

Another time you must write to me directly in regard to the difficulties that may arise as to what I have told you. Do not involve me in disputes with others. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] I have just now received your second letter. It is not necessary to dispense Bianchi from the novitiate. Let him remain among the novices and follow the course during the time that is absolutely necessary. Have an understanding with Father Spera. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After a copy.

LETTER 180.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Important recommendations in regard to the observance of the Rules, the study of theology, and other different points of religious discipline which constitute the practice of perfection.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, August 8, 1754.

I beg all of you, my Brethren in Jesus Christ, before you hear this letter read, to say the *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, and to ask of God the light well to understand and to put in execution what in the name of Jesus Christ I write to all and to each one in particular. My Fathers and my Brothers: It is not yet two-and-twenty years since the beginning of the Congregation, and it is five years since it was approved by the Holy Church; so that at this moment it should not only have maintained its first fervor, but should

moreover have increased it. Many, it is true, are behaving well; but in others, instead of advancement, there is a want of spirit. What will become of these, I know not; for God has called us into the Congregation (especially now at its beginning) to become saints, and to save ourselves as saints. As for him who wishes simply to save his soul in the Congregation, but not to become a saint, I know not whether he will be saved at all.

Poor Congregation if this want of spirit spreads among us! What will it be fifty years hence? One should have to weep and say, Poor Jesus Christ! if he be not loved by a member of the Congregation, who has received from him so many special lights, by whom will he be loved? My God, of what use are so many Communions? and why have we entered the Congregation, and for what purpose do we remain in it, if we are not endeavoring to become saints? Is it to deceive the people, who regard all of us as saints, and to make them laugh at us on the day of judgment when they will know our imperfections?

We have now many good novices, but they and others that come after, will through our example, be worse than we are; and in a short time the Congregation will become thoroughly relaxed, because imperfections will give place to scandals; and if this is to happen, far better will it be, my Brethren, that we pray the Lord to suppress the Congregation at once.

I am already old and in bad health, and am already drawing nigh to the day of account. I desire to be of as much service to you as I can; and God knows how much I love each one of you, more than my brothers and my mother: but it is not the will of God that I should endanger my eternal salvation through love (but an inordinate love) of any of you. We are all miserable creatures, and we all commit faults, but I am not pained by passing faults, but by those that are permanent, and by certain weaknesses

that do harm to the whole Community. If any one would with his eyes open espouse such faults as these, and defend them, or at least excuse them as endurable, I, for my part, declare that I cannot, and ought not to tolerate them. Such would be, for example, faults either against obedience or against poverty, against humility or fraternal charity. I hope, by the grace of God, to maintain this resolution to my death, and faithfully to act upon it, as I have promised God never to allow myself to be overcome by human respect, so as to see the brethren fail in things important and prejudicial to the others without correcting them. You are already aware that perhaps my weakest point is to be too indulgent; but I hope that God will give me firmness not to bear with the imperfect who will not correct themselves and who defend their imperfections; and I beseech you who are young, and who remain to govern the Congregation, never to tolerate a subject who should be so imperfect as not to humble himself after a fault, but should even defend it. I protest that on the day of judgment I will accuse before the tribunal of Jesus Christ the Superior who, in order to avoid causing pain to a subject, shuts his eyes to faults that do harm to the Community, and is the cause of the Congregation being relaxed. With regard, however, to the past, if there be any one who has been guilty of some fault, I do not intend now to reproach him with it; I speak only for the future.

But to come now to certain special points, I beg each one to pay attention to the following remarks:

First, then, I beg of each one to value his vocation. It is the greatest blessing, next to that of creation and redemption, which God could bestow on him. Thank Almighty God every day for it, and be afraid of losing it. Do not be deceived by the enemy of souls, who will perhaps say that you could do good even out of the Congregation, at home, and would enjoy greater peace out

of it. And what good? *Nemo propheta acceptus in patria sua.* [No prophet is accepted in his own country. — *Luke*, iv. 24.] Every one knows this, and experience proves it. A priest will save more souls in one year in the Congregation than in his whole life out of it. And to speak of personal advantage, a member of the Congregation will gain more by practising obedience for one year than he would gain in ten by living according to his own fancy out of the Congregation. And besides, we have to do the good that God wishes of us, and not that which we wish ourselves. Now God wills of him who is called to the Congregation that good and those labors that are imposed upon him by the Rule and by his Superiors. Peace, indeed; what kind of peace? *Quis restitit ei, et pacem habebit?* [Who hath resisted him, and hath had peace? — *Job*, ix. 4.] We see it, my Brethren, in those who have abandoned the Congregation. What kind of peace will God give to those faithless ones who, out of some caprice, and for want of mortification, lose their vocation, and turn their backs upon the will of God? And especially when they come to die, how shall they find peace, when they remember that they are dying out of the Congregation? I will not say more on this point, because now every one already well understands it. But the evil is, that in the moment of temptation we are blind, and the loss of vocation is not considered an evil. I call attention to this: let no one think to frighten us by saying that he wishes to leave. Thanks be to God, the Congregation has at the present moment many good subjects, and at the same time every day you see there come to us young men full of fervor and talent; for the good name of the Congregation is spread throughout the kingdom, and even out of it; and it is believed that there is great fervor and perfection in the Congregation (would to God that only half were true!): and thus the good subjects will remain with us, to give

missions and retreats. And even were we obliged to give fewer missions, it will always be better to keep up the spirit of regular observance with a few subjects, than to see the Congregation become relaxed. Those few that go on conscientiously will please God more than a thousand that lead imperfect lives. So, then, to sum up this point, unhappy he that loses his vocation! And, by the way, I renew for each one the formal obedience that I have given at other times — not to leave the Congregation without having first obtained my express permission, together with the dispensation from the vows and oath of perseverance, unless this has been already obtained from the Sovereign Pontiff.

Secondly, I beg each one to obey and to make no resistance to the commands of the local Superiors. If a subject has some difficulty, he is allowed to make it known; but then I beg him to make up his mind to obey before he makes his representation, should the latter not be entertained. So resolved, let him go and explain his difficulty, whatever it may be; otherwise, if he does not act thus, he will remain disquieted, should his difficulty not be admitted; and, being disquieted, the devil will gain much with him. Father de la Colombière made a vow always to go against his own will. Should any one not have the courage to do so much (and I do not exact this), at least he ought to be careful on all occasions to mortify his self-will, which is the ruin of souls. Speaking of obediences which are difficult (for there is no great merit in those that are easy), St. Catharine of Bologna says that we should perform them without murmuring exteriorly; for instance, by complaining of the food, clothing, or the manner of acting of Superiors, which latter is a great fault; and also without interior murmuring, for this also disturbs the soul.

I beg in a special manner of each one not to wish to change his house without evident necessity; and even

should the necessity be evident, I nevertheless beg him, before he makes his request, to resign himself entirely to the judgment of his Superior, should the latter take a different view of his case. And for my own part, I declare that I will not grant this to any one without a plain necessity; for to act otherwise might become the source of much disquietude to the subjects.

Thirdly, I beg of all not to complain one to another of what the local Superiors do. To do so may be a cause of great temptation both to themselves and to the others.

Fourthly, I beg each one to ask of Jesus Christ his holy love, otherwise all the good purposes will be of but little profit. And in order to obtain this holy love, let us strive to have a great love for the Passion of Jesus Christ, by praying and making a little meditation on it during the day, and when it is possible by making the Way of the Cross. Jesus Christ is surely much pleased when we think of the sorrows and the scorn that he endured for us. It seems to me impossible for one that thinks often of his sorrows and of his Passion not to become full of love for Jesus Christ. I pray both present and future Superiors often to insist at the Chapters on the love of Jesus Christ and of his Passion. There is nothing on which we insist in the missions more than on this love for the Passion of Jesus Christ. What a shame, then, for one of us to be found on the day of judgment to have loved Jesus Christ less than some poor woman!

And therefore I beg each one to love his cell, and not to become dissipated by wandering about here and there during the day. Let us husband our time, in order to spend it in prayer, in visits to the Most Holy Sacrament, which we have in the midst of us for this very purpose, and also in study, because this too is absolutely necessary for us. Hence I recommend to those that are confessors the study of Moral Theology; and I beg them not to follow

blindly the opinions of certain theologians, without having first considered the intrinsic reasons for them, and especially those opinions which, as may be seen in the second edition of my work [on Moral Theology], I no longer allow to be probable. This I say, and the probabilists say it likewise, that every confessor is bound to consider first, in each case, whether there be an intrinsic reason capable of convincing, for thus the contrary opinion becomes improbable. It is only when we are not convinced by such a reason that we can avail ourselves of an extrinsic probability: *probabilitas extrinseca*. Pay attention to this point; for I fear that some in the Congregation make serious mistakes in this matter. And remark that in my second book I ordinarily admit only those opinions to be probable that I expressly call probable. I do not pretend that my opinions must necessarily be followed; but I beg that before you reject them you read the book, and consider what I have written with so much labor, inquiry, and study. Now I did not undertake this labor, my Brethren, for others, or to acquire a reputation; if I had only wished to gain a passing applause, I should have willingly done much less. God knows the tediousness and the trouble that it has caused me. I have done it solely for you, my Brethren, in order that you might have a solid doctrine to follow, or at least might act after reflection. I confess that at first many opinions seemed to me well-founded, but afterwards I saw that they were improbable. Wherefore, I beg all the confessors as well as the students to read my book, for I wrote it for this end; and then let them follow the opinions that seem to them the best before God. Among improbable opinions I include especially that which holds that a candidate for ordination who is in the habit of grievous sin may be absolved, although he may have the disposition sufficient for receiving the sacrament of penance; whereas for such a one positive virtue is not fitting merely, as some falsely suppose, but is

necessary, not on account of the other sacrament that he is about to receive — because for this the state of grace would be sufficient — but on account of that exalted state upon which he enters. For such a state a high degree of virtue is absolutely necessary, since the Canonists and Doctors commonly say with St. Thomas, that such virtue *præexigitur, requiritur, necessaria est:* words that imply a real necessity and not a fitness; and the reason is, because a candidate for Holy Orders, both on account of the dignity of the state which he embraces, and of the most holy ministry which he has to exercise, must possess that positive virtue, which implies not merely an exemption from mortal sin, but the possession of a degree of virtue acquired by the previous practice of virtuous acts. Formerly I myself defended the contrary opinion; but afterwards I came to see that it was most improbable, and therefore I have retracted it.

Fifthly, and lastly, I recommend to the Superiors, both present and future, the observance of the Rules. This observance is in their hands. The Rector Major is far away: if the local Rector does not attend to it, the Rector Major cannot remedy what is amiss; and therefore it is necessary for the Superiors not merely to preach this observance, but to be the first to practise it. That which is seen makes far more impression than that which is heard. At the same time I recommend to the Superiors charity towards the subjects, in consoling them in their temptations, and in endeavoring to assist them in their necessities as far as possible, and by inquiring expressly (in the account of conscience) if there be anything of which they are in want. I recommend, above all, the monthly account of conscience, if possible the first Monday of the month; and when it cannot be made or finished the first Monday, let it be on the second. I especially recommend attention and charity to the sick, in visiting them and providing

them as far as possible with the necessary remedies, and in asking them if they are in want of anything; and if this or that be not compatible with poverty, at least in consoling them as much as possible. I also recommend the Superiors to correct in private; for public corrections do but little good, except in the case where the fault was public, for then the correction does good to the others; but even here it is better first to correct the subject in private, and afterwards publicly.

So much for the Superiors. As to the subjects, I beg them never again to say that the Congregation is not so strict as it was, and that the primitive observance is relaxed. Even if on account of the increased number of subjects more faults are committed, nevertheless each one should endeavor to correct himself, and to live in observance of the Rule; and let him understand that the non-observant, who will not correct themselves, will not be tolerated in the Congregation. Hence, when any one commits a fault, let him at once humble himself interiorly, if the fault was interior, and exteriorly, by accusing himself of it, if the fault was exterior; and on falling into any fault, let him at once make the purpose of amendment. If any one has some grievance against one of his brethren or against his Superior, let him try to take no step while in the heat of passion; let him first become calm, recommending himself to God; and then if he think it necessary, let him act, or let him speak or write to the Superior. For the love of Jesus Christ, I beg you to pay attention to this point. Oh, if this were observed, how many faults would be avoided! because in the heat of passion things appear very different from what they really are. And on this account I also beg the Superiors not to correct when they are under the influence of anger, but to wait until the mind becomes calm, otherwise they will always be falling into excess, and their corrections will avail but little.

I recommend as strongly as I can detachment from relatives, who are certainly, as Jesus Christ says, the greatest enemies of our perfection. Let every one be on his guard not even to mention the word *stima propria* [honor] in the Congregation; the greatest honor that a member of the Congregation should desire is to love obedience, and to be despised, and to be thought little of. This was the desire of the saints, to be despised as Jesus Christ was despised. He who does not make up his mind to become a saint cannot persevere in the Congregation; Jesus Christ himself, who loves exceedingly this Congregation, will drive him out. It is not the will of God that the first stones of this his own building should be so weak as to be not only unable to encourage and to give good example to those that shall come after us, but even to give little edification to those that are in it at present. Let each one well understand this. I recommend also the love of poverty, and beg all to take notice that faults against these two virtues — poverty and obedience — are not, and cannot be, tolerated in the Congregation; for if the practice of these two virtues fail, the spirit of the Congregation is wholly destroyed and at an end.

I again protest that what I have now written — just as it came into my mind — is not against any one in particular, but in general for all, and rather for the future than for the past. And I moreover beg all of you, after hearing this letter, not to suppose that I have any ill-feeling towards any who in past time may have committed some fault. I declare that as Jesus Christ has forgotten the faults of those who have humbled themselves for them, so also do I forget them. And let each understand that when any one has the misfortune to fall into a fault, if he will only heartily humble himself for it, he may be sure that I will heartily forgive him; and even by his humiliation he will make himself more dear to me than before. I say this in order that no one

may lose courage, if by chance he should ever fall into some fault. But, on the other hand, let all guard against committing faults — even the smallest — with open eyes; because the devil is wont to make use of such faults as these to lead us into more serious ones, and then to tempt us to lose our vocation; and by this snare the devil is able to drive more than one out of the Congregation.

Lastly, be assured, my Brethren, that I love each one of you, after God, as my only love on this earth; and I offer for each of you, from this moment, my blood and my life: for you who are young may do much for the glory of God: but as for me, who am old, and ill, and useless, what more service can I render? And therefore I beg each one, if he is at a distance, to write to me whenever he has the need, and to banish the idea, which the devil has been making use of to disquiet me and others, that he will annoy me by speaking or writing to me. Be sure the more one shows me this confidence, the more he binds me to him; and remember that where there is question of consoling one of my brethren and children, I leave everything. I consider it of greater importance to help one of my children than to do any other good work; and God demands this of me in my office more than anything else.

To conclude, then, my Brethren; let us — in what remains of our lives, little or much, we know not (within a short time have died three of our young men: Muscarelli, Blasucci, and Zabbatti, and Father Paul [Cafaro], whose health was that of a young man) — let us, I say, become saints; and let us love Jesus Christ very much, for he deserves to be loved, and especially by us, whom he has loved more than others. Let us love a God who died for the love of us. Let us enliven our faith, and remember that we have but a few days to live on this earth, and that eternity is awaiting us. We preach these truths to others, and indeed they are truths of faith. So, then, we have no

longer to live for ourselves or for the world, but only for God, only for eternity, and in order to become saints. And therefore let us continually offer ourselves to Jesus Christ, that he may do with us what he pleases; and let us continually beg of the most holy Mary to obtain for us the great treasure of the love of Jesus Christ. And when the devil tempts us against our vocation — and this is his great business with each one of us — let us recommend ourselves to this Mother of perseverance, and we shall certainly not lose our vocation.

I bless and embrace you all in the Heart of Jesus Christ, that having loved him exceedingly on this earth, we may all be one day united in loving him in our heavenly home. Let us not lose the beautiful crown that I see prepared for every one that lives in observance, and dies in the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, St. Francis Xavier, and St. Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 181.

To Father Gasparo Caione,[1] Rector of the House at Caposele.

He reproaches him for his excess of condescension. — Various dispositions.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, August 31, [1754].

I beg you for mercy's sake not to be so condescending. To send some one of ours to fetch Father Apice's sisters is

[1] Father Gasparo Caione was appointed Rector of Caposele about the end of July, 1754, in place of Father Mazzini who did not find the air very healthy. He was a native of Troia, and was born there, August 4, 1722. He had studied law at Naples; he was a man of great talent. Following the voice of grace, he entered the Congregation, September 18, 1751, in which he rendered very great

something that I cannot approve. You would have done well if you had tried to prevent them from coming to Caposele; for their journey to Caposele may be a cause of surprise to the relatives of the Fathers, and of inconvenience to the people of the village, etc.

If similar novelties, not authorized by usage, should again occur, be careful not to grant permission without first sending me word. This whole affair has pleased neither me nor those that have heard of it.

I have been asked from Caposele for permission for Father Francesco Saverio de Leo to hear the confessions of men. A little patience! I wish him yet to study two months so as to finish the necessary treatises. Then he may hear confessions in the missions, and especially at Corato where he will probably go. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I bless you and embrace you all. Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] Invite the usual persons to the feast.[1]

When the sisters of Father Apice come to see him, I absolutely wish that none of ours should accompany them to Caposele. Send some one belonging to the place.

This affection of Apice's for his relatives very much displeases me; gently endeavor to withdraw him from this attachment by making him perceive the danger of it. This young man makes me tremble.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the original preserved at the Redemptorist convent of Contamine-sur-Arve (Haute-Savoie).

services during his long life. He died at our house in Benevento, October 30, 1809.

1 The feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin was every year celebrated with the greatest pomp in our church of the *Mater Domini* at Caposele.

LETTER 182.

To the Same.

Various recommendations,

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, September 8, [1754].

Bear with me if I give you some advice. With age and experience I have learned many things.

As the air of Caposele is not beneficial to Father Giovenale, send him to Iliceto; in his place I shall send another Father. Let him tell you all that he knows about the Community which you are to direct.

Take care that all may make their retreat, especially should you permit Father Garzilli to do so; he justly complains that you have not for a long time given him an opportunity to make it. Let all have finished with their retreat by the 20th of October.

I hope that at this date Father de Leo has finished the study of the necessary things and that he will be able to hear confessions in the missions. If he needed to employ for this work the ten days of retreat, I should permit him to do so, in order that he may go on the missions.

What am I to say about Father Margotta? He will soon come here, and we shall talk to each other. Tell this to Father Garzilli.

I have had prayers ordered for Father Strina [1] that he may become cheerful. I embrace and salute you all, particularly my dear Don Benedetto Grazioli,[2] whom I

[1] Father Andrea Strina, a native of the city of Lettere, was admitted as a subdeacon to the novitiate, March 1, 1748. He labored much for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and died full of merit at S. Angelo a Cupolo, April 21, 1797.

[2] Benedetto Grazioli of Atella, a rich man and a great benefactor of the Congregation, had at that time come to Caposele to spend some weeks in solitude and prayer.

wish well, since he is so earnest in his love for Jesus Christ.

I have also been much pleased with your Reverence, since I noticed that my corrections did not disquiet you. Thank Jesus Christ for such a grace, as many fail in this respect. I understand very well that it is not possible on so many occasions that present themselves, always to conjecture what is the wish of the Rector Major; hence we must have patience and afterwards comply with obedience.

I embrace and bless you all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

ALFONSO.

After the original preserved at the cathedral of Monte Casino.

LETTER 183.

To the Same.

Various commissions.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, September 21, [1754].

As for the two young men of Montella, send them both, or only the one that can come.

But inquire whether they have any patrimony.

I send a thousand blessings to Father Latessa and Frater Picone,[1] who should recommend me to the Madonna, because I do not omit to do the same for them.

As regards the économe, since Brother Gerardo[2] is back

[1] Father D. Angelo Latessa and Frater D. Pietro Picone were sick at that time; and a short time after both died; the first, October 5; the second, November 9, of the year 1754.

[2] Venerable Gerardo Maria Maiella had been with Father Margotta at Naples during three months, and was re-called to Caposele at the beginning of October of this year. A year after his soul entered Paradise.

again, let him be économe, especially because, as I remember, Brother Gennaro is deaf, and moreover, is busy at the building.

As for your retreat, three days are sufficient for your Reverence.

As for the retreat for Mgr. di Nusco, I say yes, and give you permission, provided it is given within the month of October; because on the 1st of November the Fathers will have to set out for the missions.

Tell Don Benedetto [Grazioli] that I will most cordially recommend him to God, and have others to do the same. But let him render me the same favor; and your Reverence should recommend me every morning at Mass.

I embrace and bless all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the sacristy of the Oratorian Fathers at Naples.

LETTER 184.

To the Same.

Measures to be taken in regard to a student.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, September 28, [1754].

Donato Antonio, bearer of these lines, was anxious to have his son at Bovino;[1] but such a thing could not possibly have been allowed him. I have, however, consented that for the re-establishment of his health the young man might go to Our Lady of Consolation [Iliceto]. See to it, therefore, that he be sent at once to Iliceto with one of our Fathers;

[1] Francesco Saverio Manfredonia, a native of Bovino had been professed for three months, when his father came to solicit the favor of taking him to his native place.

and I should prefer that you yourself would accompany him.

If you cannot at once send Father N. as his companion, send him as soon as you possibly can. The Father that is to accompany him must behave with circumspection.

The two young men have been sent away; one had no patrimony, the other was a seminarian, and a seminarian of the Bishop of Muro.[1] Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Frater N. told his father that he felt as if he had a hot iron in his intestines. For what reason did he express himself in this way to his father? See what is at the bottom of this, and act accordingly. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 185.

To the Same.

He approves of the manner in which he acted in regard to the student Manfredonia.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, October 2, [1754].

Give thanks to Jesus Christ for having inspired you to send the young man away at night.[2] You must, however, not be disturbed. What fault could you have committed in permitting him to speak to his father in company with Father Strina? Sometimes it is unavoidable to allow young people to speak with their relatives.

Last evening I had an interview with him; he is a little

[1] These two young men were Lorenzo Nigro di Bella, of the diocese of Muro, and Giambattista Gargano di Montella, of the diocese of Nusco. Both were however admitted to the novitiate the following year.

[2] Father Caione made Frater Manfredonia set out from Caposele to Nocera, and from Nocera St. Alphonsus sent him to Ciorani.

hardened. That he concealed his temptation so long is what injured him. As for a dispensation, he must not think of it. If he wishes after all to lose his vocation and his soul, so much the worse for him. We shall try to help him as much as we can.

For pity's sake, do never use in regard to yourself the words: *Drive me out of the Congregation.* You thereby inflict a wound on the love that I bear you. I really love and esteem you very much. Even though I sometimes reprimanded you, I never yet doubted your good intentions. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Recommend and have recommended to God Father Fiocchi who is suffering greatly from fever at Ciorani. Live Jesus and Mary!

Inform me what the relatives of Manfredonia did afterwards. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 186.

To the Same.

Sentiments of the saint in regard to dispensation from the vows.

[October, 1754.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I bless your exercises and your triduos.

Your Fathers do not reason well in regard to the affair of Manfredonia. If this door is once opened, it will be sufficient for any one that is tempted and wishes to leave, to become stubborn in order to be dismissed with a dispensation; then there would be no use of making a vow of perseverance.

It is true that this subject does not render any more services, and I do not know how it will all end;[1] but so much

[1] Manfredonia, ordered to proceed to the convent of Ciorani, left it, November 21 without a dispensation from his vows, and contrary

the worse for him. For the sake of an individual I cannot possibly inflict an injury on the whole Community. The example that I would give by now dismissing him with a dispensation would afterwards create a temptation in the minds of many. It is cast up to me that I have injured the Congregation by having granted a dispensation to those that have already left us; but in their case other reasons had supervened, and perhaps I proved myself too weak in their regard. Henceforth, — let this be communicated to all — he that wishes to leave the Congregation without a reason, must make up his mind to leave it in mortal sin. No one will be able to take away from me this conviction; and tell your Fathers that no one should speak to me any more to the contrary.

This time you do not deserve a penance, but at another time if this happened again you would deserve one. I bless you. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 187.

To Father Saverio Rossi, the Rector of the House at Ciorani.

Exemplary chastisement inflicted on a disobedient subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

[NOCERA], October 18, [1754].

Since Father Grassi [1] has refused to go to Iliceto, write to him at once that on account of this refusal I dismiss him and declare him excluded from the Congregation.

to the formal obedience of not leaving this house. May 30, 1755, not having yet received the dispensation, he was forced to re-enter the Institute; but as he had lost the spirit of the Congregation he was dismissed as incorrigible; this time he was released from his vows. Such was for this unfortunate young man the sad result of having concealed his temptation against his vocation.

[1] The occasion of the expulsion of Father Gerardo Grassi is found described by Father Tannoia in his Life of the saint: "Alphonsus

Let us pray to God that, if there are similar subjects among us, they may leave us promptly. If perfect submission to holy obedience is lost among us, it will be all over with the Congregation.

It will be well to notify the Vicar-General that this man is no longer a member of our Congregation. Also inform the Bishop of Cava of what has happened, since this gentleman might assume importance in that part of the country and thus throw dishonor upon us. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 188.

To Father D. Gasparo Caione.

Various recommendations relative to the house at Caposele, to private retreats, and to the students.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, December 12, [1754].

I cannot but approve of the sale of the vineyard. As for the proceeds of this sale, since you desire them to be devoted to the benefit of the Congregation for the glory of Jesus Christ, we shall examine with Don Andrea [Villani] what is the best use we can make of them. I am of the opinion that the whole should be converted into capital for the benefit of the Congregation.

If the Archbishop Nicolaï [di Conza] insists, answer him

having ordered Father Grassi to be sent to Iliceto, the latter, who was in the house at Ciorani refused to go. But the motives of the one that gave the command and of the one that did not wish to obey were diametrically opposite. Father Grassi with little edification due to the Community, wished to assist his brother who was making his studies at Salerno; and St. Alphonsus for the same reason wished him to change his abode, and seeing the resistance that this subject made, dismissed him from the Congregation."

again, but only as if the answer came from yourself, that you have received from me the order to keep no one in the house longer than twenty days; that you had taken it upon yourself to allow a stay of thirty days, while the Lazarist Fathers keep no one longer than fifteen days. It must be understood that our houses are not prisons; otherwise we shall render ourselves odious to the whole diocese. If after this the archbishop still presses the matter, tell him that you must write to me about it, and then send me a few lines.

For certain good reasons I do not deem it expedient that Brother N. should return to your house; let him go to Iliceto whence Brother N. will come.

I am very glad to hear that there is a prospect of having dry rooms; for I am continually disquieted by the fact that the rooms there are so damp. Hence see to it that as soon as the season arrives, — in April or May, — the plastering of the rooms should be begun, according to the opinion of Father Garzilli and others.

Tell the Brothers that they must not give to women any orders to purchase things for them.

I am told that Frater N. has been given to melancholy for some time, and it is whispered here that one of the students has been mentally affected. Inform me whether the fact is true about N. and how his health is now, and whether I should write to him.

Fears are here expressed about the students who are and who will be in this house; for I am informed that they have so easily an occasion to see young girls who are engaged in working at the building. Give me your opinion about this matter, and be on your guard; for if it be necessary, we shall have to remove the young men to another place.

In regard to yourself personally send me some news about your health. I have made inquiries and was told that you are still very much enfeebled.

On feast-days it is sufficient if you hear confessions till half an hour after the particular examination, that is, till after dinner, and no longer. Do not trouble yourself about the number of confessions; and let things go as they go. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

In regard to the work on the building, I bless all that you do; yet be careful always to take counsel; and, moreover, do not incur too many expenses; for I have remarked that all Superiors are anxious to build in order to show what they have done. I beg you not to trouble yourself too much about the work on the buildings; and on account of the improvements that are to be made the Community should not be made to suffer any privations either in regard to food or clothing. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 189.

To the Same.

Answer to be given to his bishop if the latter should wish to recall him to his diocese.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, December 14, [1754].

The enclosed letters having reached me, I opened them to see what they contained; for I had been informed of the agreement made between the Signor Cantore and the Bishop of Troia, for the purpose of forcing you to go to Troia to take charge of the seminary. I do not doubt your constancy, and I have read with pleasure the letter of your worthy uncle,[1] who says that it is a conspiracy that hell has formed in order to disquiet you. But I hold for certain that this

[1] This uncle was Canon Domenico Rosato who had greatly aided his nephew when he entered the Congregation, as is seen in the letter of Father Cafaro to St. Alphonsus.

will not cause you any disquietude, and that it will only make you laugh.

Let us come to the point. The bishop threatens to order you to return to Troia. You know what answer to give; but allow me to suggest something. The bishop says that you have promised him obedience. In the first place, the reigning Sovereign Pontiff, Benedict XIV., in the Constitution *Ex quo dilectus, etc.*, of January 14, 1747, has declared that this is to be understood in the sense that the one ordained cannot leave the church to which he has been attached without the permission of the bishop, unless he enters some religious Order or regular Chapter, which our Congregation resembles. This as you see, refers to the case when the one ordained is attached to some church of the diocese. Now you have been ordained for the Congregation without having been attached to the diocese of Troia.[1] It also refers to the case when the one ordained wishes to live outside of the diocese, and not when he has entered a Congregation approved by the Pope.

Declare, therefore, to Cantore that it is not necessary for the bishop to make a move in this matter, since you yourself are able to have recourse to the Pope at Rome. I say this, because the bishop counts perhaps on the good standing and influence that he enjoys in Rome; but he surely will never succeed.

I doubt whether it is expedient to answer Cantore immediately, or to await a second letter; for if you do not answer, the bishop may give up his intention. I leave this matter to your prudence. At least I should wish that you defer your answer as long as possible; and as Cantore has

[1] September 7, 1752, Mgr. Marco de Simone, Bishop of Troia, had in fact written to St. Alphonsus in the following terms: "When you consider Don Gasparo Caione ready for sacred orders I shall at once ordain him, although I have deferred perhaps for a long time to ordain all the others,"

taken the affair upon himself, and has compromised the bishop, I would counsel you to complain about this proceeding in your answer.

It is nevertheless desirable that you should write at once to your uncle, to thank him for his good advice, and to ask him, if an occasion offers, to persuade the bishop not to follow up his intention. I fear that this good prelate may give you and me a great deal of trouble. He has near him Don Carmine ..... who has been at the Chinese College, formerly Rector of the seminary of the neighboring diocese of Troia, a learned and saintly man; why does he not take him? If you write to Cantore, you may hint this to him. After all, if the bishop wishes a good Rector, let him not grudge the expense, and he will have one.

To sum up. Write so forcibly that they will persuade themselves that they will never succeed in shaking your resolution. I think that even now it would be better to send an answer, but do so only after two weeks; otherwise the bishop might become ill-disposed towards us, thinking that we had withheld your letter.

Give me a copy of what you have to write, so that I may be able to make my answer agree with yours; for it may easily happen that the bishop will afterwards write to me about the matter. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 190.

To Sister Maria Vincenza Giannastasio in the Monastery of the SS. Annunziata, at Cava.

Behavior amid contradictions. — Advice in regard to direction and confession.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, January 8. [1755?]

I have received the stipends for fourteen Masses, and the two baskets of sweetmeats; for which please accept

my thanks. For pity's sake, not so many presents! What I desire of you is that you should become a saint.

As for the persecutions to which you are subjected, love them. They please me more than if you were working miracles.

Always recommend to our Lord in a particular manner those persons who persecute you more, and render them services whenever you can. Show them at least a pleasant countenance, salute them affectionately, but without affectation; speak well of every one, and whenever you commit a fault against meekness, repent of it at once; then become quiet.

The advice of Father Stasio is good, but it is not good for you. It is better for you to think of the mercies of God of which you have been the object, and of the immense and ardent love that Jesus Christ bears to a loving and faithful soul when it remains faithful even in aridities and mortifying things. The Lord draws you by the way of love; it is this way that you should walk: it is that which appears to me the surest for every one. It closely unites souls to God; it gives strength and perseverance. *Quis me separabit a caritate Christi?* [Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? — *Rom.* viii. 35.]

I have spoken of the confessor to Mgr. [of Cava]. Have patience; do as I tell you. Far away from you as I am, I can give you but little assistance. Take then D. Pietro Galise; tell him all that I have told you, and you will see that he will not differ from my direction, at least in essential things. For the rest, in accidental and less important things, as the omission of Communion or mortifications under certain circumstances, you should always be guided by his decision. Have patience. Here is what you should do: Ask Monsignor for this good priest, and he will surely send him to you.

If, however, Don Pietro should give you instructions

that are absolutely opposed to mine, we shall then arrange with each other afterwards. But in the mean time, do what you are told; begin in this way; then write to me from time to time, and let us see how the vessel will sail. I will not fail to give you all the necessary assistance. You should say to yourself that after all it is God who is to make you a saint, and not the confessors.

Recommend me to Jesus and Mary. Live Jesus and Mary!

I remain

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 191.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce.

He exhorts her to love contempt and to love the Sisters that oppose her.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, January 14, 1755.

I have been sick; and now I answer your letter. I hear that you are disconsolate, and that pleases me; but what displeases me is that when any one bestows upon you marks of contempt, you complain and lament for entire months. This shows that you are not yet humble and dead to yourself. Do not tell me any more such things, but inform me that when you receive any injury you are inferiorly pleased, and that you feel great affection for the one that has gratified you in this manner. In your meditations let all your resolutions and prayers be directed to the attainment of this disposition; and then if you commit faults, renew your resolution and be calm.

I again recommend to you a day of retreat more than the use of the discipline.

As for your idea that you wish no more to see creatures, tell me what do you mean by that? You are in the convent, in which you must necessarily have intercourse with your Sisters and serve the Community. As for the parlor, do not go there except through obedience and sheer necessity. Explain therefore to me what is your idea.

Always recommend me to Jesus Christ, and try to love him much. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 192.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

He presses him to make another application to the Archbishop of Conza. — Various details.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

PAGANI, January 27, 1755.

I have just received your letter in which you say nothing about going to the Archbishop [of Conza], because perhaps you may not yet have received my letter. I therefore briefly say again what I have written.

Please go as soon as possible to the archbishop and beg him in my name to remember his promise, that is, of sending if he thinks fit, the candidates for ordination to our house when the time for the ordination arrives. Tell him that I have not Fathers to give the exercises at the seminary more than once a year. On these occasions sermons must be preached for the seminarians that study, and also for the priests that come there, and sometimes in the presence of the Monsignor himself. Hence it is necesssary for us to

know what kind of ecclesiastical sermons are to be preached; and there are some of us who know not how to do this kind of work; nor can one repeat the same sermons that are once preached.

This was the substance of my letter. Your Reverence is prudent enough to represent this to him most distinctly, but you must speak resolutely. It is necessary that this affair should be at once settled; for the longer we follow a custom, the more difficult will it be for us afterwards to break through it.

As to the students, the matter is understood. It may be that I shall send you Frater de Michele,[1] because the air here does not benefit him.

To Signor Cantore [of Troia] it seems fit that your Reverence should write again briefly what you have already written. I have already received your letter and have forwarded it. Erase from it the words; *although the Pope should command it*. It is sufficient to say that if the bishop should give a formal order, you would not be obliged to obey. And if an order comes from Rome you are also ready to go to the Pope.

As regards the flag-stones for the rooms, I have been told that they are the cause why so many insects are in the rooms; this is the reason why I wish to have them replaced if possible by a sort of pavement, although this would increase the expense. If possible I shall have workmen come from this place.

In the Chapters recommend obedience in the missions, and inform them that during the mission they should not touch any one, big or little; that they should make meditation, at least once a day, and should have Chapter.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

BROTHER ALFONSO.

[*P. S.*] The secretary sends his regards, and copies as

[1] The student Michele di Michele.

much as he can of what you have written to him, but it is not very suitable. I send you a paper on the manner of preaching, and if you could have it gradually copied, and then have it sent me, you would do me a favor, because I have not time to copy it.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 193.

To the Same.

He gives instructions how a Father is to be treated who is destined to teach.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, March 23. [1755?]

Father de Meo is coming to you. It is sufficient if he applies himself to his studies. Do not charge him with the duty of attending to a confraternity nor of hearing the confessions of grown up persons. However, if he manifests a desire to hear confessions, let him be satisfied with preaching, but do not urge him to do so.

Let there be no writing done during class.

Send me the writings of the deceased members, particularly those of Father Cafaro.

After a copy.

LETTER 194.

To Sister Maria Anna di Gesù, at Cava.

Counsels in regard to prayer and the practice of religious virtues.

[The year 1755?]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

To judge by your letter, the Lord calls you to perfection. Take care then not to grow lukewarm; for souls whom God

calls to perfection with a special love and whom he destines to walk on the narrow road of virtues, should respond to his offers. If they wish to follow the wide road of lukewarmness, they run the great risk of being abandoned by God and of being damned.

Thank the Lord for the lights that he has given you, and especially for the gift of prayer of recollection of which you speak. Although one does not meditate on any subject in particular, this prayer is the best of all when God grants it. But God does not grant it always. Now when you are a prey to desolation without the power of meditating and without the power of recollecting yourself, continue to make prayer with patience and perseverance. Do not doubt that you will be dearer to God than before.

Now since you have not this recollection at prayer, you should help yourself with books; and when you cannot do any other thing, resign yourself to the divine will, abandon yourself to the mercy of Jesus Christ, ask his pardon, and multiply the prayers and the acts of love towards Jesus and Mary. Whatever you suffer in this state offer always to God.

Besides detachment, I recommend to you scrupulous attention to holy poverty and to obedience; it is in this delicacy that consists in great part religious perfection.

I also recommend to you charity towards all your Sisters; support meekly and peacefully reprimands and contempt, and render good for evil to the one that persecutes you. The religious that does not do so will never become a saint. Let it, moreover, be one of your exercises in prayer to prepare for contradictions.

Finally, in the state of desolation in which you are, try to obtain the needed permissions to communicate as often as possible; and when it happens that you commit some fault, such as some act of impatience, etc., do not be troubled; humble yourself, quietly repent of it, and unite

yourself more closely to God by an act of love and of confidence. If you fall *a hundred times* a day, use *a hundred times* the same remedy.

Follow these counsels, and recommend me to Jesus Christ in your visits to the Most Holy Sacrament and to the Most Holy Virgin. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant in Jesus and Mary,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 195.

To the Superiors of Missions.

Regulations relative to confessions.

[The year 1755?]

All the Superiors of missions should know that it is my express wish, without any possible interpretation, with the exception of a case of necessity, which will rarely happen, that in all our missions the people when the mission is given should be fully satisfied in regard to their confessions. If therefore it should be necessary either the number of the sermons should be increased, or the Fathers should remain for some time to hear confessions without preaching. Moreover, let the meditation be made in common, at least once a day, in accordance with the Rule. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Let every one understand that he is obliged to act in conformity with this order, if he sees that the contrary is practised. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

ALFONSO,
Rector Major.

After an old copy.

LETTER 196.

To Sister Maria di Gesù, at Ripacandida.

Answer in regard to some difficulties. — The sending of two little works.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, April 2, 1755.

I am happy to know that you are in peace, and I answer your two difficulties. — You have at present, so you tell me, neither doubts nor troubles. Besides, you enjoy a peace that is troubled by nothing. — Here is my answer in a few words: Keep this peacefulness as long as fears do not come to visit you; and when they come, abandon yourself to the hands of God. I say *when they come;* for I believe that you will not always enjoy this tranquillity. Our life should be interwoven with flowers and thorns. But this is sufficient. Let us always say: I wish for myself what God wishes, and nothing more.

I send you the *Visits* [1] with the appendix which I have added, and I very much thank you for your remembrance of me before God. I beg you for the love that you bear to our Lord, to continue; for I need graces for myself and for others. I also send you the "Novena to St. Teresa."

Recommend to God a very important affair which refers to the Congregation; and ask Mother Prioress to have the Community recite for this intention the *Salve Regina* every day for nine days.

I am writing hurriedly; tell therefore the Mother Prioress that I thank her for the love that she shows for our Congregation; but how can I prevent other priests from

[1] The little work of the *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin.*

adopting our costume? Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of the Chapter of the cathedral of Cagli.

LETRER 197.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

Discretion of the saint in regard to a vocation and to the foundation of a new house.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NAPLES, May 19, [1755].

Francesco de Paola [1] is making me lose patience with his letters. I feel sorry for him, but I know not what I can do for him. If he should ever leave home and come here, I would not send him back; but I cannot write this to him. I should feel a scruple in regard to the Congregation if I would expose it to the danger of having a useless subject who could not be ordained. Besides I could not even write this since I fear that my letters might be intercepted. For this reason the enclosed letter is written in a tone of indifference.

I am staying here to arrange that affair of Sicily; the archpriest of Girgenti has already come; but I see that there is trouble ahead. In fact negotiations have been going on with the Fathers of the Mission, and I have declared, that as long as these negotiations are continued with the said Fathers, it is altogether improper for us to

[1] A most excellent young man of Ruvo, who as we have already indicated became afterwards Superior-General of the Congregation in the Pontifical States.

become involved in this affair about the foundation, otherwise it might appear that we wish to supplant them.

As to the new Father of whom you speak, have patience. Father Gallo has had a severe attack of illness and is using remedies: let us see how he will get on. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I must inform you that towards the end of July Father Apice should come here in order to go to Sorrento to give a novena, for which Canon Corbo, who lives with the Cardinal, has most urgently applied to me. Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of a family of Gragnano, diocese of Castellammare.

LETTER 198.

To the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

Petition for the confirmation of the foundation of the house at S. Angelo a Cupolo in the archdiocese of Benevento.

[Month of May, 1755.]

The priest D. Alfonso de Liguori, Rector Major of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, humbly exposes to your Excellencies the following facts:

For the greater glory of God and the profit of souls, he has for about three months, with the permission of Mgr. [Francesco Pacca] Archbishop of Benevento, as appears from the permission granted to him, begun the foundation of a new house at S. Angelo a Cupolo, a district of the city of Benevento and a fief of the archbishop. This foundation will, with the divine help, result to the greatest spiritual advantages of the clergy, since in said city and in this whole vast diocese there is not a house in which the spiritual exercises can be given to the candidates for ordination, nor

any Congregation to instruct the same in the art of preaching, giving missions, hearing confessions, and so forth. This foundation will also benefit the people who are both in spiritual want and numerous, as well as destitute of the ministry of priests in such a manner that hardly had some of the Fathers of the Congregation gone among them and given them some missions and other exercises of piety conformably to the end of their Institute, when they were in the greatest request in most places of the diocese. Hence, for the greater stability and safeguard of so useful a work, besides the received permission of Monsignor Archbishop of Benevento, and the testimonies of extraordinery contentment of the people of said district, the petitioner also desires the approbation and good pleasure of your Excellencies; humbly begging that he may be consoled with such approbation, etc.

Answer of the Congregation. "The Congregation of the very Eminent Cardinals who preside over the affairs and consultations of the Bishops and Regulars, in view of the report of the Archbishop of Benevento, has charged the latter (the truth of the facts given having been demonstrated) to grant to the petitioner the object of his request according as he shall think fit.

ROME, June 13, 1755.

C. A. CARD. CAVALCHINI.
P. GUGLIELMI, secretary."[1]

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] Sacra Congregatio Emorum et Rmorum S. R. E. Cardinalium negotiis et consultationibus Episcoporum et Regularium præposita, attenta relatione archiepiscopi Beneventani, eidem benigne commisit ut, veris existentibus narratis, Oratoris precibus, pro suo arbitrio et conscientia indulgeat, juxta petita.

ROMÆ, 13 Junii 1755.

C. A. CARD. CAVALCHINI.
P. GUGLIELMI, secretarius.

LETTER 199.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

Various recommendations.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, June 1, 1755.

Since Father Garzilli has arrived at your place, let Father Nittoli go to Iliceto.

Father Apice is wanted by all means at Sorrento for the novena of the Assumption. Hence see that he goes there as soon as possible during this month.

I bless all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the Neapolitan edition of 1848.

LETTER 200.

To Father Emanuele Caldarera of the Congregation of the Oratory.

He sends him two of his works.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, June 4, [1755].

I send you the second volume [of my Moral Theology] with a little work on the religious state. This little work, it is true, is directly addressed to our Congregation, but may also be useful for religious vocations of every kind. At least you may use the *considerations* that are at the end, and you will no doubt be pleased with them.

Father Pagano [1] has told me that he wished to take my Moral Theology for those that follow the longer course in your house. Remind him of this promise if you think fit.

[1] Father D. Tommaso Pagano, the first director of the saint, died shortly after, August 25, of the same year 1755.

Please let me know at an opportune time what has been concluded in regard to the foundation of Girgenti.

Do not forget to recommend me to Jesus Christ; I have also been recommending you and are recommending you still. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

While humbly kissing the hand of your Reverence,

I remain your very humble and very devoted servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 201.

To the Sovereign Pontiff Benedict XIV.

He sends him the second volume of his Theology, and asks him for some spiritual favors for his Congregation.

[June 8, 1755.]

Most Holy Father: I send to your Holiness the second volume of the Moral Theology which has caused me two years of labor. I hope that it will not be disagreeable to your Holiness to deign to cast a glance at it.

Besides the Bull of your Holiness, I confess that I have received great light from your most worthy *notifications* which have been my guide in the questions that are therein examined with great learning and labor. Of the practical matters appertaining to the instruction of confessors, I have made an abridgment in the vernacular, have inserted it in the work, and had it separately printed, and I send it to your Holiness together with other little ascetical works which I take the liberty of offering to you, trusting that in your kindness you will be pleased with it. The said abridgment entitled *Pratica* will I hope be of great use for the instruction of new confessors in regard to every state and every kind of persons, both good and bad.

I am not so presumptuous as to claim a recompense; it is

sufficient for me that your Holiness accepts and blesses what I have offered, so that my books, if there is any good in them, may contribute to the salvation of souls. But prostrate at your feet, I supplicate your Holiness for a spiritual favor in behalf of my little Congregation. By the approbation of your Holiness our Congregation has come into existence. The favors that we ask your Holiness are: the communication of the privileges of the Fathers called the Pious Workers,[1] and the faculty of being able to have the subjects of the Congregation ordained under the title of *mensa communis*, at least for a certain determined number, conformably to what you have kindly granted to the Fathers of Monte Argentaro, called Passionists. In this way the Congregation will be able to develop itself, since the harvest that we have had at hand is so great.

But in order that the favor may be complete would your Holiness be so kind as to grant to the Rector Major of our little Congregation the faculty of giving *Letters dimissory*, to the said candidates for ordination, and that the same may be ordained by the Archbishop of Benevento? Finally, to comply with the request of the archbishop of this diocese we have founded a house which is entirely subject to your Holiness; it is in the diocese of Benevento, at S. Angelo. Hence I beg you to give a special blessing to this foundation, by which we are doubly the subjects of your Holiness. I have asked that *they may be ordained at Benevento;* otherwise the favor would be useless for the reason which the sagacious mind of your Holiness can appreciate. Should we not be thought worthy of obtaining this favor from your Holiness who has called into being this our little Congregatian, much less should we be able to obtain it from your successors.

We are moreover in trouble by not having the royal

[1] This communication was conceded by a Pontifical Rescript of July 19, 1756, and a Brief of August 11, 1757.

exequatur; since we have not yet thought the time opportune for presenting the Brief of your Holiness granted to us seven years ago. If your Holiness were to say a word to our king in regard to the royal consent, I should think that it would be of great avail. . . . . (*The rest is wanting.*)

To this petition the Pope sent the following answer:

[July 15, 1755.]

To our son Alfonso de Liguori, priest of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer at Nocera de' Pagani. — Benedict XIV.

To my dear Son, health and apostolic benediction.

We have received your letter of June 8, together with the second volume of your Moral Theology, and the other books of less bulk, but of great profit to the salvation of souls. We thank you for your present, and having cursorily looked at your book on Moral Theology (which is dedicated to us, for which we send you special thanks) we have found it full of valuable information; it will surely meet with universal approbation and will be most useful to the public. We shall gradually read it, and we hope that what remains for us to read will correspond to what we have read.

We have read the petitions that you have offered in behalf of your Congregation. With the exception of our blessing, which we willingly bestow upon you and upon the whole Congregation, the rest will be of little service to you as long as you have not obtained the royal *exequatur* for our Brief, expedited seven years ago. We shall not omit to do our part with the Duke of Cerisano, ambassador of the king and of the two Sicilies, who is with us, and if our efforts are successful, we shall think of the rest. . . .

Given at Rome at St. Maria Major, July 15, 1755, the fourteenth year of our Pontificate.

According to the original draught preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 202.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

Various affairs. — Orders and counsels concerning the building of the house at Caposele.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, June 10, [1755].

I answer your last letter. I have written to you a letter in which I told you that there is no need of coming in July since the Chapter had to be postponed till October, and D. Saverio [Rossi] has been unwell and had to go away for a change of air, and I do not know how his health is at present. There are other reasons, but the chief reason is that Don Andrea [Villani] must necessarily be present at the foundation of the house at Benevento; a storm is feared on the return of the archbishop.

As regards Father N. my dear Gasparo, I have told you, and I say, that this young man makes me tremble for his perseverance because he has a head too thoughtless and unsteady.[1] At the end of July he is to come here to give the exercises at Sorrento; if he has to drink the waters at Castellammare, he may set out sooner and come at the beginning of July. But he does not like the idea of staying with me, because I gave him a gentle correction. Now what is to be done? If he should at the end do something rash, so much the worse will it be for him. God will then have no need of him. Let us assist him, but it is not necessary to satisfy him in everything, for he is never satisfied. I commit him in this matter to your prudence.

Concerning Father N., his brother has written to me. I

[1] This Father seems to have been Father Apice; but the fear of the saint vanished a short time afterwards, because the Father reformed in such a way that he lived and died a saint, as may be seen in his Life written by Father Agostino Saccardi.

answered him that for an interview with the said Father I gave him permission, although I hear that the interview has already taken place. As to going afterwards to Naples, I forbid, have forbidden and will forbid such a thing; and inform the Father of this in a gentle way so that there may be no thought of going to Naples. What trouble we have with so many different heads!

As regards the paving-tiles, that is understood. As to the plinths they may be put down afterwards, and it will be better to make a trial with paving-tiles in two or three rooms; and a trial might be made with the rough-casting of which Father Ferrara has spoken; but the architect says that this will all be useless, and that the dampness of the walls, the frost of winter coming a little afterwards, will make all come down.

The news about Fr. Agostiniano pleases me, but I have a doubt about his perseverance.

I bless all. The affairs at Benevento are now prospering.

Let me hear at once, when you receive information, whether Father Margotta has made good arrangements with [D. Benedetto] Grazioli. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

When speaking about the building with the Archbishop [of Conza] especially about remedying the dampness, be careful not to enter into any promise that things should be done so or so. If he speaks of the matter evade the question and say that counsel has been taken about the best method, that a trial would be made, etc. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the Neapolitan edition of the year 1748.

LETTER 203.

To Sister Maria Vincenza Giannastasio, at Cava.

Counsels regarding the acceptance of employments and the use of mortifications.

[The year 1755?]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I never promised Don Francesco di Franco that I would come to give the novena; I only said to him that I would try to send another Father. But this has not been possible.

See whether five hours of rest are not too little for you; take six hours of rest if you suffer from want of sleep. As for employments, in future neither desire nor refuse any, and pay attention to this point, for thus you will do the will of God. Continue your Communions as I have regulated them, and do not trouble yourself about the rest. As regards mortifications, those that I have allowed you are sufficient; do not do more; only you may wear during the day a little chain on your arm in order to remind you that you should offer acts of love to Jesus and Mary.

I have told you that I can direct you from afar; do not therefore say any more that I should call upon you. This would give me pain, and I would not come.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 204.

To Father Carmine Picone, Vice-Master of Novices in Ciorani. [1]

He tells him to invest certain postulants with the habit.

[About June 12, 1755.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Francesco Antonio is coming; keep him with the novices, and let him do all that which those must do that are preparing for receiving the habit. He may receive the habit with the two others [2] on the feast of St. Aloysius.

Let them make the exercises, but allow them to come to recreation. Also moderate for all the practices of devotion and application during the warm weather. Let them go out often, and moderate the use of the little chains while the weather is hot. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

From an old copy.

LETTER 205.

To the Same.

A recommendation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Certainly, grant to N. some solace and more liberty; but assist him, as he has much to contend against. See that you give him some remedy, milk or some other thing. Tell him from me that he should have confidence; that nothing is the matter.

I bless you all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

From the Roman edition.

[1] The Master of novices was Father Tannoia; but on account of bad health, he was obliged to stay at Iliceto for some months.

[2] The two other candidates that received the holy habit with Francesco de Paola, on the feast of St. Aloysius de Gonzaga, were Michael Ferrazzano di Solofra and Sebastiano de Jacobis di S. Fele.

LETTER 206.

To the Same.

Qualities that novices should have.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your Reverence should go on with great courage and confidence in God, and not be disturbed about anything, nor be grieved, if a novice grows cold and leaves us. Help all of them as far as you can; but if any one commits habitual faults and does not show the right spirit, let me know this, because then I will send him away. Let him remain, who is willing to remain. Let only those remain *that wish to suffer all, and wish to be really saints!* Tell this to all the novices and add that he that has not this spirit, is not made for the Congregation.

There are now many of us. The Congregation has no need of men who are without fervor.

Among other things see that they obey you. Always tell them that *those that are stubborn, or attached to their relatives and to self-esteem*, cannot be of any use to the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 207.

To the Same (?)

Encouragement to be given to a postulant.

Live Jesus and Mary!

If N. does not come to receive the letter, carry it to him yourself, and encourage him. He will still have many

tempests to go through in order to follow his vocation, as his father is at present by no means favorable.

I very well know that his father is disquieted; but what I am sorry to hear is, that the young man has grown colder and has become discouraged. If he remains firm, he must not doubt that God and we shall come to his aid. But if he begins to waver, saying now yes, then no, you must declare to him that I will even refuse to receive him.

Carefully inquire about his health; for I have been told that he has some trouble with his chest, and that he has been spitting blood. If this is the case how could I receive him if he suffers from his chest? Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 208.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

Various recommendations relative to the works of the saint and to the interests of the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, June 22, [1755].

Let me know what business Father Margotta has transacted with [D. Benedetto] Grazioli, if you have any news about it.

Don Andrea Villani asks and begs that an alarm-clock be sent to the place where he is [at S. Angelo a Cupolo]. Have patience; you may keep for yourself the English clock with the alarm, and send the old one to Don Andrea.

I expect Father Apice; he is to drink first the mineral waters, then he is to go to Sorrento to give a novena or a retreat. He will come on the 10th of July.

I send six copies of the *Pratica*.[1] Later when I have an

[1] This little work has the title "Pratica del confessore per ben

opportunity, such as to return to you the conveyance to bring Father Apice, I will send you the second volume [1] with other copies of the *Pratica* to sell.

Then you must inform Father Caprioli of the cost of the second volume. The *Moral Theology* is sold at twenty *carlini*.[2] An appendix has been added, and it cannot be sold for less. The *Pratica* costs one *carlino*.

As for all the books sold and that are to be sold, and all the other books which you will require of me do not write to me, but have in everything an understanding with Father Caprioli; the care of them has been intrusted to him by Father Saverio [Rossi] who pays for the printing.

I have already received news of Father Margotta through Father Ferrara. Tell therefore Father Margotta that as soon as he receives anything from Grazioli he should at once come here to see me; we shall then see what is to be done.

Should Father Fiocchi be with you, tell him that I have written to him two pressing letters, to return at once to Iliceto, because his presence is needed there.[3] Let him speak to Father Giovenale. Tell this secretly to Father Fiocchi, so that he should set out at once.

It would be well if in kind words, without dispute, you could obtain a diminution from the tax.[4] If you succeed in doing so, you must thank all those who have in any way assisted us.

Let me know all about your affairs and what has been

esercitare il suo ministero." (Practice of the confessor for the worthy exercise of his ministry.)

[1] The second volume of his Moral Theology.

[2] Twenty *carlini* = 8 fr. 50 centimes.

[3] Father Carmine Fiocchi was then Rector of the house at Iliceto.

[4] To understand the meaning of this, see note added to the letter dated August 5, of the year 1755.

done in regard to the tiles. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the Neapolitan edition of 1848.

LETTER 209.

To Sister Maria Vincenza Giannastasio in the Monastery of the SS. Annunziata at Cava.

Behavior that she should adopt in the state of desolation in which she finds herself.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, June 22, [1755].

I answer you briefly. I have read your letter, and I feel more happy because of the desolations through which the Lord has made you pass than if you had written to me that you had wrought ten miracles.

All the lights, inspirations, knowledge and intimate communications with which you have hitherto been favored came from God; of this I assure you in his name. Now God wishes you to be a saint without delay; and it is because he wishes you to be really a saint that he has put you into the state in which you are.

In this state continue to persevere in all your exercises. I also permit you, when you have time, to make another half hour's meditation; finally, continue your Communions and all the rest. As for meditation, always make it with a book, and use for this purpose my little work; especially read the *considerations* on the Passion of our Lord, and more particularly the affections that follow them.

In the state in which you are, you have to perform more frequently three things when you pray and communicate. You should, first, humble yourself, by acknowledging yourself worthy of severe chastisements. Secondly, resign

yourself entirely to the will of God, and offer yourself to remain during your whole life and during eternity in this state of pain, and even in still greater pain if it is God's will. Thirdly, abandon yourself absolutely to the arms of the divine mercy.

Have frequent recourse to the Blessed Virgin. Let your acts of love ordinarily consist in an entire offering of yourself to God. Finally, always recommend me to Jesus Christ.

Confidence and courage! I see that Jesus Christ wishes to make you really a saint.

I thank you for your little present. I do not wish you to take again so much trouble.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 210.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

Recommendations in regard to various works of the saint.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, June 28, [1755].

Send the enclosed letter to Ripacandida at the first opportunity.

It seems to me that I have sent you a certain number of copies of the *Pratica* for the use of your Community. Now I send ten more to be sold. Show them to those that come to visit you. In regard to the cost of the copies of the *Pratica*, I answer as I did in regard to the *Pratica* and the *Moral Theology*, have an understanding only with

the Fathers at Ciorani,[1] and punctually send them what they order.

The *second volumes* I will send you at the first opportunity when your conveyance returns, so that they may surely arrive.

I expect [Father Bernardo] Apice when he comes to drink the waters at Castellammare. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa! — I also expect Father Margotta as soon as he has settled his affairs with Grazioli. Live Jesus and Mary!

BTOTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the Neapolitan edition of 1848.

LETTER 211.

To the Same.

Various recommendations about different subjects.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, June 30, [1755].

You have appointed Father Margotta to perform certain labors, now that we stand in need of him; but what is done is done. I beg you, however, do not in future arrange any exercises within the month of June, unless it be at the beginning of the month.

As for the missions which the Archbishop [of Conza] wishes us to give it is sufficient that you have mentioned this to me. Answer neither *yes*, nor *no;* do not accept any more missions, nor hold out any hopes for any more; because in the coming year I do not know whether we shall be able to give even one mission there, especially in winter. Now when the time arrives and it will be necessary to give

[1] Father Saverio Rossi, Rector of the house at Ciorani, and Father Pasquale Caprioli, the Minister.

the promised missions at Benevento; I shall send my excuse to the archbishop.

Let Father Apice be here about July 10, to drink the mineral waters.

For Polestra and Melaccio [1] it wil be necessary to procure letters dimissory.

In regard to Mgr. di Muro the affair is settled.[2] I have written to him that Francesco Antonio de Paola is with us, that when he wishes he may send for him.

As for closing the church, you have to come to an understanding with the archbishop.

As to the économe, your Reverence is the Rector. Appoint Brother Gennaro for this charge if you think fit; and Brother Gasparo you may employ wherever you please. Afterwards I will try to send him with Father D. Andrea [Villani, of S. Angelo a Cupolo]. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

When Father Apice comes, send me all the *second volumes* that you have there,[3] because I wish to insert some sheets and have them bound; and then I will send them back. This I will do when the conveyance that brought Father Apice returns. I will send you the *second volumes* to-day if the young carrier will take charge of them, together with six copies of the *Pratica* and two of the *Dissertations on probable opinion*.[4]

[1] D. Vito Polestra and D. Donato Melaccio, natives of the archdiocese of Conza, who were then to receive Holy Orders.

[2] The Bishop of Muro, Mgr. Vito Moio, was greatly displeased at the entrance into our Congregation of young Francesco Antonio de Paola, his diocesan.

[3] The second volume of his Moral Theology, to which he wished to add *Elenchus* 99 *questionum post primam editionem anni* 1748 *reformatarum*.

[4] The work "Pratica del confessore per ben esercitare il suo ministero," of which mention has already been made, and the work "Dissertatio scholastico-moralis pro usu moderato opinionis probabilis in concursu probabilioris."

I send you also a package containing copies of the *Elenchus* for the second volume; have them distributed among those that have the first edition of the work. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I embrace and bless you all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Tell Father Margotta to read the letter at once. Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved at our house of Monterone at Rome.

LETTER 212.

To the Same.

He enjoins upon him obedience to the physician.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, 6. [July, 1755?]

Before speaking of other things I must tell you that you do not belong to yourself but to Jesus Christ and the Congregation; hence you must take care of your health and be obedient.

In a word, I tell you that you must obey the physician in all things, just as the Rule commands us to do, either on the one hand by eating no more food prepared with oil, or on the other hand by taking the medicine that is prescribed. Moreover, during the day you must sleep at least half an hour, and during the night, six full hours.

What shall I say in reference to the letters dimissory of the young men? I pray to Jesus Christ to grant me patience. I have also written a petition to the archbishop, which you will please forward as soon as possible. If an answer comes addressed to you, open it; and if you see that the archbishop remains inflexible, ask Father Margotta

in my name to go himself to the archbishop and to ask for this favor, etc. Write also to the Vicar-General, and thank him specially for me for all that he has done with the archbishop in favor of these young men. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 213.

To the Novice Luigi Capuano,[1] at Ciorani.

What was to be his behavior under difficult circumstances in regard to his vocation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

SARAGNANO, July 16, 1755.

My dear Brother, summon up courage! I am confident that God expects great things of you, since hell creates so much noise in order to draw you away from your vocation.

It may perhaps happen as I have told you, that you must go by order of the king to some monastery, to be examined in regard to your intention. Recommend yourself to the Mother of God, and fear nothing.

To the monastery your relatives will undoubtedly come to tempt you, and the monks themselves will practise the devil's art under pretense of appeasing your father and your mother; they will represent to you that it is a matter of conscience if you thus bring ruin upon them. Make no account of such scruples; if they wish to be ruined, it will be their fault. Tell them that in order to appease them you cannot imperil your eternal salvation by losing your vocation, which is quite certain.

Do not doubt that, after this trial at the monastery, your relatives will no longer annoy you.

[1] Luigi Capuano, born at Cava, June 21, 1739, was admitted to the novitiate, July 14, 1755.

Pay attention to this point: if you go to the monastery, do not believe what certain religious may tell you; they have been gained over by your relatives, and will give you a thousand reasons to induce you to return home. If they come, be careful not to listen to them, and be sure that they wish to deceive you. Hence as soon as they begin to perform the office of the devil, dismiss them in a kind manner. Do not undertake to answer them, because they will succeed in perplexing you. The best thing would be not to answer, but to say that you will recommend yourself to God in order to find out his will; and then rid yourself of them in this way.

I say this, not that you must now pray to God that he may make known to you his will, since he has already made it known to you in making you understand that he wishes you to be a member of the Congregation; but this answer will deliver you from their importunities. By saying that you are praying to God to enlighten you in regard to his will, you will silence them, and thus force them to retire immediately.

Since Father Tannoia is not there, be guided by [Father Alessandro de] Meo. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Brother Alfonso,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in our house at Prague, Bohemia.

LETTER 214.

To Sister Maria Vincenza Giannastasio.

She should, notwithstanding her interior desolations, persevere in her exercises of piety.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

SARAGNANO, July 21, [1755].

Your whole letter pleases me. One thing, however, would give me pain; it would be to hear that you are now abandoning the career upon which you have entered.

Courage, then, and firmness! Continue the exercises that you have begun, although they may be to you like the pains of hell; continue, and be assured that you will certainly become a saint.

I have told you already, and I repeat, that according to the rules laid down by the saints it is clear to me that the state of desolation and pain in which you find yourself will last a long time; perhaps it may last even till your death.

No, it is not true that God has abandoned you; on the contrary, he loves you more than before; but he wishes to try you, and to consume in the fire of tribulations the rust which your past faults has attached to your soul. Take courage, then, and go on. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 215.

To the Novice Luigi Capuano.

Additional advice as to the trial to which he was to be subjected.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, July 22, [1755].

My dear Brother: Your relatives have already addressed to the king a memorial, in which they say that *you entered the Congregation, having been misled by an elder brother, who had interested motives, and that you were taken against your will to our house at Ciorani; moreover, that the Fathers, seeing your mother advance to embrace you, rudely repulsed her and caused her to fall to the ground, to the great scandal of all.* See what lies and what calumnies! Now this memorial they did not present to the king, but they carried it to Mgr. Borgia, who has written to me that we must satisfy your relatives in having you examined as to your intentions in a place where you would be under no restraint. Monsignor must, therefore, be obeyed.

Do not fear; for everything will turn out well, and so also the bishop thinks. We shall send you to Naples to the Chinese College, the Superior of which and those that are there are my friends; all will favor your vocation. If, however, your relatives send priests or religious to find out your intentions, answer according to the letter that you sent me last.

It was with regret that I read in your letter *that you had experienced a very violent attack on your vocation,* — words that made me doubt at first about your constancy; for I feared that you had somewhat listened to the temptation. I was, however, consoled by what you afterwards wrote to me, namely, that you knew perfectly well what you have

to do, and that you would resist every temptation until death.

Always recommend yourself to the Blessed Virgin; and when a suggestion from hell is made to you, do not reason about it, but simply answer by pronouncing the names of Jesus and Mary. Do not allow yourself to be shaken; after this struggle I hope that your relatives, that is I should say, your enemies, will become quiet. I bless you. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 216.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

He charitably excuses the defects of a subject. — Various matters.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

CIORANI, August 3, [1755].

My dear Don Gasparo: What shall I say about Father N.? He believes that he is doing right when he does those things, and disturbs others and also himself; and I fear, as I have frequently said, that the devil may on this account make him one day lose his vocation. He is, however, humble, zealous, observant of the Rule, and loves the Congregation; but he labors and engages in work with such a passion that he disquiets himself and others. What is to be done? Every one has his faults. I have more of them than others.

As to Brother Gerardo, *fiat voluntas tua!* [Thy will be done!] I send him the blessing.[1]

In regard to the grain, those at Pagani wish that I

[1] The Venerable Brother Gerardo Maiella was then collecting for the building of the house at Caposele, and he died shortly afterwards, that is, October 15, 1755.

should write to you to send them ten *tomoli*.[1] I have answered them: What right have you to ask for these ten *tomoli?* Now I have written that your Reverence had spoken to me in your last letter about debts, provisions that you have to buy, etc.

For the rest, if your Reverence could send them, as if of your own accord four or five *tomoli*, it would be well.

As to the sick Fratres, I am glad that they are somewhat better. Say from me to Frater Melchionna that Father Ferrara has said nothing to me, that he was feigning sickness, and that if he had said anything to me about it, I would not have believed him; tell him to take care of his health, to do the will of God, and remain quiet.

Let twenty-five *carlini* be sent to us, as I have spent that amount for repairing a copper-plate engraving of the Madonna. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Brother Alfonso,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the Neapolitan edition of 1848.

LETTER 217.

To the Novice Luigi Capuano.

He advises him how he should behave in the temptation to which his vocation is exposed.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Nocera, August 4, [1755].

Your relatives have become somewhat pacified, but not entirely; and as I hear, your father and your mother are going to Ciorani to tempt you by tenderness and by false reasons. Be on your guard; this will be the last assault; do not give a chance to the devil to raise a laugh at your behavior up to the present day.

Yet while reading in your letter that you are continually

[1] Ten *tomoli* = 5½ hectolitres; a hectolitre being equal to 2 bu. and 3.35 pks.

agitated by temptations to give up your vocation, I cannot help fearing for you. But it is not on account of these temptations; for as long as you recommend yourself to God and repel them, there is nothing to fear. What I fear is, that you give too much ear to them, that you reason with them, and that you do not take care to have recourse to Jesus and Mary when they come. If you act differently from what I tell you, you will lose the grace of vocation and of eternal salvation; for your vocation is clearer than the noonday sun; if you lose it, what will become of you?

I should like you to write to me again and to tell me what motives the devil proposes to you to leave the Congregation after you have so much desired to enter it, and God has given you so many graces to enable you to do so. Is it perhaps your fondness for your relatives? But why? To please your relatives should you wish to abandon Jesus Christ who has deigned with so much love to call you to a life of sanctity? Is it perhaps because in the Congregation one has to suffer? — Enough of this! for I am only speaking to the winds, not knowing in what way the devil wishes to entrap you; this is the reason why I beg you to write me in detail what are your temptations.

For pity's sake! my dear D. Luigi, do not expose yourself to lose this precious crown that Jesus Christ is preparing for you. When an infernal thought enters your mind, represent to yourself the moment of death, and consider what remorse you would feel if you had the misfortune to die out of the Congregation after having abandoned God on account of some earthly purpose. Ah, how I should regret to see you lose your vocation! The efforts that Lucifer has made to excite your relatives, or rather the enemies of your soul, to do what they have done, convince me that if you remain firm, you are destined to do great things for God; for all those who in the Congregation have been engaged in these terrible contests

with their relatives, without allowing themselves to be shaken, have afterwards done marvellous things.

For mercy's sake, when the temptation presents itself, repel it forcibly and indignantly by invoking the holy names of Jesus and Mary, and often repeat these all-powerful names. Renew then your resolution by saying: No, my Jesus! I do not wish to leave Thee; no, never; should I even be obliged to die on account of my resolution. — And if, notwithstanding all this, the temptation does not leave you, go if you have permission, to the foot of the altar, before the Blessed Sacrament, or throw yourself, in your room, at the foot of the crucifix, and sigh and pray in this manner: My Jesus, help me; I do not wish to leave Thee; no, no, no! — Then without delay confer with the Master of novices about your temptation; and if it be necessary, write always to me.

I wish to help you as much as I can; but if you neglect to have recourse to Jesus Christ and to the Blessed Virgin, who is the Mother of perseverance, and to consult the Master of novices, I regard your vocation as lost. Look at poor N. and poor N. on the point of leaving the Congregation, yet without their own fault; oh, how I pity them! and you should voluntarily listen to the suggestions of hell by returning to the world, so as to become the laughing-stock not only of hell, but of your whole diocese, of Bishop Borgia, and of everybody! I hope to God's goodness that this may not be so.

Every morning, on rising, I beg you, renew the firm resolution to persevere in the Congregation, and always repeat it during meditation, at your Communion, at your visit, and at your examination of conscience. Always invoke Jesus and Mary, and consult your Father Master. By acting in this manner you need not fear to lose your vocation.

I bless you and I await your next letter so as to know in what way the devil tempts you. I recommend you to

Jesus and Mary; do also the same for me. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 218.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

He counsels holy revenge.[1]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, August 5, [1755].

I have heard in what a complimentary manner the people of Caposele have acted towards you. Well! we must try to revenge ourselves! Be therefore careful to increase almsgiving at the door, and be liberal to those that ask alms. Besides, take special care of the confraternity of which those ungrateful men are the members.

What I regret is that these disturbers of the peace will leave the confraternity and not have the courage, to return to it; for from this will arise a spiritual injury for which I am more sorry than for the temporal. Try therefore and

[1] Father Caione speaks of this fact in the juridical depositions for the beatification of the saint (*Summar.* n. 18, § 93): "The house of Caposele," he says, "was burdened with a seigniorial tax, above the sum which his Majesty, Charles III. had assigned us; the latter sum amounted to about four grains a day [about 20 centimes] for each subject. I succeeded in having the Municipal Council convoked to abolish this enormous tax of forty ducats [170 frs.] annually; as the tax exceeded the sum given us as an alms by the king; but all in vain. I found myself covered with shame and confusion; every one contradicted me. I thus reported the whole affair to the servant of God, and he answered in the following terms: 'As the people of Caposele have treated us so well, it is necessary to think of avenging ourselves; but how shall we do this? Listen: be more liberal henceforth in dispensing alms, be more assiduous in the confessional; when you are called to the sick run without any hesitation; do not complain of the wrong done you; let this be your revenge.'"

ask others to try by kind words to induce them not to give up the confraternity; invite them especially if it be necessary, without however making mention, particularly in sermons, of what has happened. During the novenas let the preacher encourage them to frequent the confraternity.

As for those that have conducted themselves so loyally, you must thank them in a special manner; and it might be well, if you think fit, to go from house to house to thank them; at least you will derive the advantage that they will remain attached to us. What else could we do? Such is the world. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 219.

To the Novice Luigi Capuano.

Happiness that one enjoys in the Congregation. — Answer to several objections.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

SALERNO, August 7, [1755].

I have read your last letter, and I am consoled to hear that you are adopting the means to overcome the temptations of the enemy.

As for your relatives, besides Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and the saints, who are to you more than a father, a mother, and brothers, are we not also brothers to you? Your relatives love you, but as enemies, because they wish that which will make you lose your soul; we, on the contrary, love you as true friends, desiring to see you happy in this life and in the next. Happy, I say, even in this life; for the pleasures of the world do not satisfy the soul, while a holy life with the innocent recreation that the Congregation permits, is able to delight the soul, because in such a life it finds God. In the beginning you may not entirely enjoy this peace, since you must first overcome the

temptations by which God wishes to try you; but after the victory one enjoys the peace that surpasses all the delights the world and the senses can procure: *quæ exsuperat omnem sensum* [which surpasses all understanding].

Besides, as you see, it is not true that with us we are always shut up in the convent. When you are a priest you will go on missions the greater part of the year, moving through the country in order to save souls.[1]

One dies young. This is not true; for many among us enjoy better health in the Congregation than they enjoyed in the world. And after all, if die we must, can there be anything more beautiful than to die for the love of Jesus Christ? Of what use is life, if we do not employ it for God?

O how much was I pleased by what you wrote at the end of your letter concerning your relatives! Thank Jesus Christ and his holy Mother, who have inspired you with these holy sentiments. Courage then! let us sanctify ourselves, and pray to Jesus Christ for me. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 220.

To Sister Maria Nicoletta Leoni (Di Calvanico), in the Monastery of S. Giuseppe at Fisciano.

He recommends to her resignation to God's will.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

SALERNO, August 11, [1755].

I have received your first letter enclosing a *honorarium*, and the Mass has been said. I received your second letter to-day here at Salerno, also enclosing a *honorarium;* and

[1] Luigi Capuano became later a great missionary, but he had not the good fortune of dying in the Congregation, as we shall see further on.

to-morrow I will say the second Mass for you in order that the Blessed Virgin may obtain for you the grace that you desire. But you should be fully resigned to the divine will; if not, the Blessed Virgin will not grant you the grace. I recommend myself to your prayers. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I did not answer you the other day, as I did not know whether you were at Fisciano, your letter not indicating the place where it was written. If I answer you to-day, it is because I learned by chance that your letter came from Fisciano. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of the Leoni family at Calvanico.

LETTER 221.

To Sister Maria Vincenza Giannastasio.

He encourages her to suffer contradictions in a Christian manner, and gives her important advice.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

SCALA, September 14. [1755?]

I write you from Scala where I received your letter. All the storms, both exterior and interior, which you experience, I have foretold you. They are the cause of affliction to you; as for me they afford me consolation.

How happy am I to know that you are treated as a foolish woman! Be courageous, and continue to be thus foolish for the love of Jesus Christ.

The words of your confessor were for you a cross harder to bear; but he spoke to you with the best intentions. For the rest, I repeat my appreciation and the former obedience that I have imposed upon you, and I assure you on the

part of the Most Blessed Trinity that you are in the grace of God. Not only does God wish your salvation; not only has he pardoned your sins; he also really wishes you to be a saint if you persevere.

Be then firm in omitting nothing of what I have told you, and unceasingly pray to Jesus and Mary to obtain perseverance. To this you should always come back, for the persecutions are great, and I believe that they will become greater.

If you think fit, confide entirely in the ordinary confessor, and beg him to speak in your defence to the Superior of the convent in order that you may be able to live in peace. If you do not wish to make this offer to the confessor, beg at least the bishop to come to see you; expose to him in a general way the past and the present state of your conscience, and tell him what I have advised you to do. Monsignor can indeed render you a great service by ordering that you should be left alone.

To go to the parlor? To see your relatives? There is no longer any question about that. Henceforth there should be for you only God, and nothing else.

Take care not to omit the common exercises, and to attend them punctually; fulfil also the duties of your employments, and render service to the Community as much as obedience imposes this upon you; for if you fail in this point, you may be attacked and may be charged with illusion. But how could this be done, if you never fail in any of the duties of your state of life?

The attractions that you feel from time to time, I am convinced, come from God. It is God that draws you to his perfect love by communicating his strength to your soul in order to resist the storms to which you are exposed. They are, you may be sure, not illusions, but divine favors, and great favors, which God grants to you in order entirely to gain your heart. Regard this as certain, an

your poor soul will in this conviction take courage to resist the attacks of temptation, of distrust, of all kinds of contrarieties.

If the persecutions should continue, I should be happy, I repeat, if you could have an interview with the bishop; for he is a man of God, is prudent, and well understands how to guide souls. He will encourage you and deliver you from the annoyances which the religious and the directors may cause you.

Follow then my advice and continue the Communions, prayers, mortifications, and all the rest. However, whenever you are not very well, omit without scruple your mortifications according to the degree of your infirmity; and in doubt, do rather less than more.

If you speak to Monsignor tell him that it is I who have wished you to have this interview. You would also do well, in ordinary doubtful things and daily difficulties, to consult your ordinary confessor, whoever he may be, and to obey him if he imposes something upon you, or if he diminishes *for a time* your various exercises. I say *for a time;* for, as a general rule, I do not wish you to omit anything that I have arranged for you. I speak thus because, being far away I cannot direct you in all things that daily occur. For the rest, go on, and have not the least doubt that you are on the right road.

In your Communions always pray for me and for the Congregation, especially at this time when our wants are so great. I bless you. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 222.

To the Same.

She should accept a charge without objection.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, October 16. [1755?]

I answer your letter in a tardy manner; for I have been ill for a long time.

As for the office of attendant at the *turn*, if it is intrusted to you, accept it without objection. The distractions that it will cause you will be distractions which God wishes.

You will have, you tell me, a thousand eyes fixed upon you. — I am delighted that this is so, for you will thus be more attentive not to commit faults. Otherwise they will say: *See the saint! how beautiful is her speech, how beautiful is her conduct!* Let me know whether you have spoken to Monsignor. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humbly servant,

ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 223.

To the Same.

He exhorts her to tend to perfection with courage and perseverance.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, November 2, [1755].

For pity's sake, no more presents. I thank you, but I desire of you but one thing: it is that you devote yourself to the task of becoming a saint. Why speak to me of coming

to preach a novena? I set out for Benevento in a few days with nearly all my companions.[1]

The answer that you gave to Monsignor afforded me great pleasure. See how God comes opportunely to your aid through your Superiors! Be then faithful, and do not leave the path on which you are now walking, even though you should have to combat hell within and without.

Above all, do I recommend to you to be faithful to your accustomed prayers as long as your services are not needed by the Community. I also recommend to you detachment from all, and from myself in particular, since I can assist you only from afar. I have written out for you certain rules; observe them, and imagine that I am always repeating to you what I have said and written to you.

I send you the new edition of the little work called the *Visits*, printed by D. Benedetto Gessari; hymns are added to it, and at the end you will find a treatise on the will of God. As all perfection consists in conformity to the divine will, you may little by little use this short treatise even for meditation.

Always recommend me to Jesus Christ in your prayers and in your Communions. I wish you to receive holy Communion every day, except on one day of the week. Communion will obtain for you perseverance. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After a copy.

[1] In the *journal* of Father Pasquale Caprioli we read this notice: "November 14, 1755, Father Rector Major went to give a mission at Benevento, and returned with Father Spera to Pagani, December 12."

LETTER 224.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

He reproaches him for incurring a superfluous expense.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

November 16, [1755].

I saw Brother Francesco, and having asked him what he had been doing at Naples these past days,[1] I received the answer that he had been looking for a copy of St. Augustine which he expected to purchase for forty ducats. But I know that you already have St. Augustine in your library. Why then make such an outlay? You will say that the copy which you have is badly printed; but I answer it is sufficient that it is a copy of St. Augustine, and a copy that is suitable for us poor people.

Then I should like to know with what money you have made this purchase. If it is money from uncertain restitutions, I should feel scrupulous about exchanging it for a better printed copy of St. Augustine; if it is money from Don Gerardo,[2] the priest who has been received, I wish also to have a word to say; since I am bankrupt on account of the many expenses that I have made; and on the other hand, I find myself indebted to the amount of thirty ducats for the work on the *Expla-*

[1] Brother Francesco Tartaglione, having finished the penance of which we have spoken in the letter of May 10, 1752, was sent back to Naples where he lived as he had always till his happy death in a house of the Congregation. At that time St. Alphonsus, while on his way to the mission at Benevento, was staying for two days at Naples with his mother who was seriously ill, and thus it happened that the Brother spoke to him about the purchase of the works of St. Augustine.

[2] D. Gerardo Gisone, born February 10, 1720 at Recigliano, in the diocese of Muro, made his profession, September 8, 1756, and after a virtuous life, died in 1765.

nation of Scripture. The publisher calls for his money, and I know not what to do. If it is the money of that priest, we should at least divide the sum between us.

You have in your house two bad Consultors, Fathers Fathers Apice and Leo, who wish to have books in a grand style, but not in accordance with our poverty. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

If you have any money to spend I would rather have you buy the works of Bellarmine, Spondano, Rinaldo (Compendium of Baronius), the library of Mansi. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the monastery of the discalced Carmelites at Modena.

LETTER 225.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, Rector of the House at Iliceto, and Master of Novices.[1]

He forbids him to incur a superfluous expense.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BENEVENTO, November 17, [1755].

I have heard in what misery you find yourself. For the present I do not see how you manage to live. There is

[1] In the general catalogue of the Congregation we read the following statement: "In the General Chapter held on the 15th of October of the year 1755, after deliberately weighing the matter, it was decided by the Fathers assembled in Chapter to admit into the Congregation youths who have attained the age of sixteen years and six months, whereas formerly they could not be admitted before their eighteenth year. The climate of Ciorani has not proved very beneficial to the novices; besides, by reason of the many courses of spiritual exercises held there — the number of those following the exercises being at times two hundred — the novices were disturbed and distracted; it has therefore been decided to transfer the

but little income to be hoped for. The lands are not leased. But you would say: *Let us go to Iliceto; let us go to Iliceto.*[1] And now have you anything to live on there?

Could not your Reverence in this embarrassed state of affairs avoid certain expenses? I tell you and beg you to expend no money except for what is absolutely necessary for your support. If this produces no effect, you will all have to remove to Ciorani. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 226.

To his Brother D. Ercole de Liguori.

He begs him to ask for him the blessing of his dying mother.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BENEVENTO, November 23, [1755].

Yes; to serve you I have already written to Brother Francesco [Tartaglione] to assist you until God calls our mother to himself.[2] How greatly am I consoled that she is now undisturbed by scruples!

novitiate to Iliceto, to the house of Santa Maria della Consolazione. The place was truly well adapted for a novitiate, being far removed from all the noise of the world; the novitiate was placed under the care of Father Antonio Maria Tannoia, Rector and Master of novices." Thus far the catalogue.

[1] Father Tannoia had done his utmost to have the novitiate transferred to Iliceto.

[2] His pious mother died a few days after the saint had written this letter, and he received the news of her death with perfect tranquillity. The following is what Father D. Pasquale Caprioli says of this event in his juridical deposition (*Sum.* n. 11, § 43): "His virtue was heroic on hearing of the death of his most pious mother. Donna Anna Maria Cavalieri was a lady of so religious a spirit that she daily recited the divine Office like a cloistered nun, and was so exact and scrupulous in regard to the fasts of the Church that she observed them most rigorously notwithstanding her old age,

Here we are giving a large mission in the city of Benevento; there is a great concourse of people, and there are eighteen Fathers engaged. We shall stay here for a month. There is no other news.

Send me the ornament which was promised by you to the Blessed Virgin; it will serve to adorn her crown. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Ask mother's blessing for me and tell her that God and the Blessed Virgin will surely secure for her eternal salvation. And I have recommended her to the prayers of the people. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your very affectionate brother,

ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of the Boccafogli family at Rome.

being ninety-four years old when she died. She led a devout life and practised mental prayer, in which she was directed by her own son. Our servant of God heard the sad news of his mother's death while giving a mission at Benevento, and without having lost his self-possession he preached in the evening, and merely told the people in a quiet way that they should recommend to God the soul of his mother."

Moreover, Father Nicolò Grossi in his juridical deposition (*Sum.* n. 11, § 154) speaks thus: "I saw him perform an heroic act of resignation to the divine will when he received the news of the death of his mother at Naples. We were to go with him to a mission in the city of Benevento. Having heard that his mother, whom he himself directed in the ways of God, was ill on account of her advanced age and other indispositions, he sent us ahead on the usual Bracigliano road, he himself taking the road to Naples where he arranged all the spiritual affairs of his mother, and then set out for Benevento. A few days after, he received a letter announcing her death. He came to table with us, and before dining he said in a tranquil manner without having lost his composure that he had received notice of his mother's death; and that on the following morning we should have the charity to apply the Mass for her soul; in a firm voice he intoned the prayers recited

LETTER 227.

To Father Pasquale Amendolara,[1] at Pagani.

Various recommendations. — Some details in regard to the mission at Benevento.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BENEVENTO, November 23, [1755].

I rejoice to hear that Father Mazzini is better, but he might have waited a little while longer and not set out while suffering from fever.

You did well in regard to Frater [D. Fabrizzio] Cimino. Your Reverence should write to Father Caione to speak or write for me — it would be better to have an interview — to the Archbishop [of Conza] in behalf of Polestra and Melaccio. But in the mean time Polestra and Melaccio should prepare for the examination for subdeaconship, because the archbishop will come to examine them. It is necessary for them to know the treatises *de Horis canonicis*, *de Ordine*, and especially *de Subdiaconatu*, with the treatise *de Sacramentis in genere*. Tell Father Siviglia to direct them in this matter.

I send to Ciorani the manuscript of Father Mazzini.

As for Frater [D. Ignazio] Fiore, the affair is being arranged.

I have already written to Ciorani and to Naples for copies of the Moral Theology and of the *Pratica*.

Here the mission continues amid a great concourse of people. On Saturday a mission will begin at four other places, and we shall give one to the nobles. There are

before meals. Both I and my companions were filled with admiration at such virtue."

[1] Father Amendolara, born at Contursi, in the diocese of Conza, December 20, 1723, entered the Congregation in the year 1747, and died, May 1, 1758. He was greatly beloved by St. Alphonsus, because he was full of fervor and a man of great talent.

many that wish to enter our Congregation, but are moved to do so by the exercises and the missions; their vocation must however first mature.

We have made great friends with the Jesuits. Here there is being established a beautiful congregation of young ecclesiastics to make them good apostolic laborers.

I bless you all, and especially the students. I will return about the 21st of December. This time will appear to me a thousand years. So far I have been ill twice. Now I am well, and am at work. Live Jesus and Mary! Father Spera is at work and gets along. Live Jesus and Mary!

Tell Father Mazzini to mention in Chapter that it would be a very great fault if one, when writing to any one of us, would put on the letter the words *matters of conscience* and the letter should contain nothing of the kind.

Write this also from me to Father Caione so that he may speak of it in Chapter. Live Jesus and Mary!

If you have an opportunity, send me some more copies (the small edition) of the *Visits* printed at Naples. Find out the time when the conveyance comes from Ciorani to this place. Live Jesus and Mary!

Send a hundred *Visits* to Ciorani so that they may be sent to me at the first opportunity. Live Jesus and Mary!

Brother Alfonso,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the Neapolitan edition of 1848.

LETTER 228.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

The measure in which accessory sciences should be studied.

NOCERA, December 15, 1755.

.....As for the cornices, that is understood; leave them in the choir, because the choir belongs to the church. [1]

I have heard some whispering that Father Leo wishes to teach mathematics, or geometry. For the principles of geometry and the four rules of arithmetic, *concedo* [I grant permission]; for more, *no*. Even Father Mabillon, who was at the head of learned men, forbade this to the religious. Tell Father Leo that by all means the course of philosophy should be finished in two years. I regret to see in the Congregation that the spirit of vanity and useless erudition is gaining ground to the detriment of important sciences....

After an old copy.

LETTER 229.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, Rector, and Master of Novices at Iliceto.

Advice in regard to the health of the subjects, to useless expenses, to the practice of mortification.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, December 31, [1755].

In regard to Ansalone, Father Ferrara has written me a fiery letter. He tells me that it is suspected that he has been spitting blood. Hence as to his admission, tell him in

[1] A little before, the saint had written thus to the same Father: "Know that I do not wish to have cornices at the doors, in the choir, or in the library. Have patience; if you have put them there, have them taken away and see that everything be made plain. Poverty loves simplicity and what is necessary, not what is superfluous."

my name that he must have patience, and that he should wait another month, in order that it may be more surely seen how his health will be, especially since his father has written that he was suffering from costiveness. Let him in the mean time not be dejected; I will afterwards shorten his novitiate.[1]

I say that he should still wait another month; but when he has been once received, and has been sent by me into the country to see whether he will recover, what need is there of a new admission? However let us give this satisfaction to Father Ferrara, by keeping him in suspense for a month. But though he may have been received a second time I should have to dismiss him if he has a relapse.

Ansalone himself writes to me that he is perfectly well. Tell him in my name to take courage; he is already a member of the Congregation; why should he fear? If he continues to remain well, he shall be one of us; but if bad health returns, his admission will not hinder him from being sent away; let him be patient and cheerful.

Let us now come to a matter of greater importance. You write me that bread is wanting..... But why incur so many useless, or unnecessary expenses, — expenses that are out of proportion to the present scanty resources of this house, or hardly conformable to the obedience that I have given you not to incur any expense except through sheer necessity? For pity's sake, do not now think any more of making improvements in the building, nor of any other expense but what is absolutely necessary. At present remain as you are; provide for your wants as well as you can; later on we may think of doing these things if divine Providence will permit us. According to what I learn there is a debt of a hundred and sixty ducats at Lacedogna;

1 This was done. Giambattista Ansalone was admitted to the novitiate, January 24, 1756, and made his profession September 8, of the same year.

there are also debts at Foggia; and there is a want of oil, grain, wine, etc.; well! to what a pass will you find yourself reduced? Are you going to feed on grass, or will you be imprisoned for debt? I shall at last be obliged to treat you according to the rumors that now prevail at Ciorani.

The Chapter[1] against my opinion has permitted the giving of a second glass of wine to any one that expresses a wish for it; but you must inform the novices that he that does this always or without a real necessity will give very little edification, and show but little mortification. I beg you to pay particular attention to this matter; for when there is question of profession I will ask you about it.

As regards having two rooms made for yourself, give up the idea for the present; later on we shall speak of it.

Frater N. writes to me for sweetmeats; I send him something that I withheld this morning from the young people among whom they were to have been distributed. I should have been better pleased had the novices asked me for mortifications and the means of loving Jesus Christ, rather than for sweetmeats.

The novice D. Gerardo [Gisone] writes to me that he is quite content, etc.; pay particular attention to him; for priests in the novitiate have more temptations than others.

I bless you all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I send you the hymn of St. Aloysius.[2] Live Jesus and Mary!

After the Roman edition.

[1] The Chapter that was held at Pagani in the month of October of the same year.

[2] This hymn in honor of St. Aloysius is found among the works of the saint (Vol. ix. page 438).

LETTER 230.

To the Student Don Mauro Murante, at Melfi. [1]

He permits him to return to Pagani.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

PAGANI, January 7, 1756.

I have read your letter, and it has so much affected me that I cannot help granting your request. Come, then, to this house at Pagani; but travel in the most convenient way possible, and take, I beg you, the same precautions as at your departure for Melfi. Choose also for this journey favorable weather and less frightful than we have at present. I am here waiting for you. Do not forget to bring me the accounts that you will be able to collect in regard to Brother Gerardo.[2]

While awaiting the pleasure of seeing you soon, I embrace you in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

[*P. S.*] I am expecting you, my dear Frater Mauro, and hours appear to me to be ages; but whether you are sick or well, it suffices that you belong to God. Do not, however, set out, I beg you, in damp weather, and as much as possible protect yourself against the cold.

I bless you. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of a family at Melfi.

[1] Mention will again be made of Mauro Murante in a subsequent letter. He was born at Melfi, May 6, 1735; he received the habit of our Congregation February 13, 1754, and was professed December 24 of the same year.

[2] The Venerable Brother Gerardo Maiella used to stay with the Murante family whenever he came to spend some time at Melfi. It was, therefore, this family that furnished the account of the miracles wrought in this city by the holy Brother. (See Life of Brother Gerard.)

LETTER 231.

To Father Gasparo Caione, at Caposele.

The sending of some points with regard to the Life of the Venerable Brother Gerardo. — Various counsels. – Seditious pretensions of the lay-brothers at Iliceto.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, January 11, [1756].

I have received your long letter which you first wrote to me.

I understand that St. Augustine's works were already bought, but I was wishing you would have bought Petavius. But have patience; let us divide the twenty ducats. For in the destitution in which I am (and God knows how great it is) I have bought this *Commentary on Scripture*, and I am half sorry for it; nevertheless it is certainly useful; it gives only the literal sense, but it is a sense that is indeed very necessary for one to know.

Please inform me whether the Archbishop [of Conza] is in the diocese or at Naples. If he is in his diocese, write to him from me to ask him whether he will allow Frater [Don Vito] Polestra to take Orders *in tribus diebus*, as the young man has completed his studies, has abilities, and has attained his twenty-sixth year.

I send you hererewith the *notes* taken by Father Giovenale[1] on the Life of Brother Gerardo. Preserve and take a copy of them as well as you can, as I have asked you to do. See also about the time that you can devote to this matter. It would be well for you to spend about a quarter of an hour every day on the work, and thus you will finish the work gradually. I send you also your own

[1] The Venerable Brother Gerardo had died, October 15, 1755, and Father Giovenale having been his director for a time, he had written an account of his Life just as Father Caione had done.

manuscript; it will serve to remind you of a great many things.

I am glad that the seminarian Guglielmo has joined us. I would wish you to write to him to procure the permission of the archbishop before he sets out for Naples. His resolutions under the form of promises to the Madonna are truly full of tenderness.

As for Father Nittoli, I told him to continue to act as Prefect according to what you wrote me in your last letter. Tell him, however, from me that he should make no difficulty in giving absolution even several times a week to those of our Fratres who accuse themselves only of venial sins, past or present, provided *at the time* there is no habit of relapsing into sin and even when there is no extraordinary sign.

With regard to the contributions,[1] do as seems best to you.

I bless all and especially the Prefect of the students with all his subjects.

Inform me of the number of retreats that you will have to give during this Lent. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa.

Have a watchful eye upon the lay-brothers, and do not allow them to claim *rights*. At Iliceto there has been a semi-revolution on this subject. The Brothers maintained *that they should take precedence of the novices; that they should make the common acts after dinner, and not in the evening after having toiled all day*, as is customary in other houses, now that the winter is here; and *that they should have the privilege of taking a siesta*[2] *after dinner*, which they have not now, as the days are short and the night's sleep is sufficient. Moreover, they assert that the

[1] See Letter of August 5, of the year 1755.

[2] *Siesta*, the taking of an after-noon nap, practised by people of hot countries and by other people.

Carmelite lay-brothers and the Franciscan lay-brothers gained the exemption from washing dishes, and I do not know what other privilege. A fine state of affairs, truly! Hence your lay-brothers have to perform the common acts every evening. Do not allow the *siesta* during the day, unless there be a real necessity for it. As for washing the dishes and serving at table, it will suffice to have the chorists do this occasionally, with interruptions, and when the lay-brothers have had special work to perform.

Finally, let us carefully avoid customs that may afterwards give rise to disputes. Read my letter to Father Apice; read it to the chorists of the house, and then send it as soon as possible to Father Apice.[1] Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of our convent of Saint-Trond, Belgium.

LETTER 232.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, Rector of the House at Iliceto.

Punishment that he should inflict upon the seditious lay-brothers. — The study to which he should devote himself,

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, January 13, 1756.

I have just read of the fine doings of the Brothers. All those that have conspired to go away deserve to be expelled. I will however pardon them this time. But I cannot pardon the novice-brother; send him away at once. As however he is the ring-leader and hot-headed, I fear that he might do you some harm or might lead astray some other Brothers,

[1] Father Apice, Minister of the house at Caposele and as such charged with the care of the lay-brothers was at that time occupied in the work of the missions.

if you dismiss him from Iliceto. Hence I should say that you send him to another place, for example to Lacedogna, or elsewhere, with a letter addressed to some friend, telling him that as the bearer is no longer a member of the Congregation he should do me the favor of dismissing him. Enough; do as you think best, but expel him immediately, and endeavor as I have said to prevent a scene.

Then take the habit from Brother Giacomo until further orders; he should eat his meals outside of the refectory, and receive Communion only on Sundays.

Since they have mentioned the dispute among the Carmelite and Franciscan lay-brothers, take care that no new custom be introduced in regard to serving at table and washing the dishes. For the beginning at least see that as heretofore the lay-brothers are made to wash the dishes and to serve at table, and only *from time to time but with interruptions* appoint the novices to do this work.

It does not matter that on this account it will be necessary to free the Brothers of other work. But enough on this subject. Let us keep up our customs, let no other customs be any longer mentioned, and let the Brothers avoid saying: *That is none of our business.*

Call all the lay-brothers to you, one at a time, and tell them that I am angry with them, etc., and let them read the enclosed letter that I have written to them. Call Brother Cesare and tell him privately from me that he should be watchful to see who murmurs and complains, and report the matter to you; you should then communicate the name of the culprit to me. Tell him that he should at once reprimand the one that says a word.

I also hear at the same time of your miseries. I do not know how you can subsist without grain, without oil, without linen, and without money. I send you ten ducats (and I give fifteen *carlini* to the Brother for his journey): but will this be sufficient? I am thinking of imposing

a little tax on all the houses. But with all this shall we succeed in remedying the evil?

Father Ferrara writes me that he could send away Frater Vitelli on the ground that there are doubts about his patrimony. If it is certain that he has none, he cannot of course be received. He has however been already received; it is true, he is deficient in talent, but he behaves well. When Father Villani comes consult him and write to me.

In regard to Father Villani, I have indeed made him *Visitor;* but you need not send for him during this carnival, and make him leave the many missions that he has to give.[1] It is sufficient if he comes during Lent. Write to him at once to remain where he is. It would have been better, before writing to him to come, you had written to me.

I have written to Ciorani that they should send you a copy of the "Glories of Mary."

I allow you to have duplicate books of devotion for the novitiate; but I cannot allow you to read Cassiano and Alessandro. How head-strong you are! I should rather have you read half an hour every day my Moral Theology so that you may be able to hear confessions. Are you never to hear confessions? It is not for want of intelligence. You must acknowledge that in this matter there is some tepidity, or may be laziness, on your part. Study at least the principal treatises, as *de Præceptis Decalogi*, *de Peccatis*, *de Pœnitentia*, *de Matrimonio*, *de Censuris*, *de Charitate*, *de Conscientia* and *de Legibus*. I mention those treatises that you have not yet read. I do not wish to impose this upon you under obedience, but try to study them when you can.

[1] Father Villani was at that time Rector of the new house at S. Angelo a Cupolo.

I bless all and especially the novices. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of the house at Pagani.

LETTER 233.

To the Lay-brothers of the house at Iliceto.

He complains of their conduct and threatens them with punishment.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, 13, [January, 1756].

Dear Brothers: God knows what great pain it caused me to hear of the faults committed by you in so short a time, faults especially of pride; it should be your duty to acquire the virtue of humility which is the virtue proper to lay-brothers.

Well (speaking in general), I pardon you all; but I beg you not to force me to chastise you again for such chastisement may and will draw after it eternal punishment: if you oblige me to expel you from the Congregation, I do not know what will become of you; I should tremble for your eternal salvation.

Do not think to intimidate me by saying that you wish to leave. Every day I am forced to refuse admission to men who wish to enter the Congregation; however even if no new-comers were to arrive, Brothers might be obtained from other houses, where they happen to be numerous.

Hence I beg you not to talk any more about leaving, for that alone would induce me to dismiss you from the Congregation.

Now that the winter is here, you will make the common exercises of the day in the evening, for then you have time,

as you have not to study like the chorists. Moreover, as the days are short, the *siesta* is not necessary; the night's sleep is sufficient for you. That is the practice in the other houses.

I ask you, if you were at home living with your relatives would you rest and make your exercises during the day, or would you work? We should always be charitable to those who are not in so good health as we, for they need our charity. You are always to take the last place, after the Fathers, students, and novices. What a shame, to see Brothers claiming precedence!

The Carmelites and the Franciscans are members of Orders, making solemn vows; you on the other hand, belong to a Congregation in which the Rector Major can dismiss subjects whenever he sees fit to do so.

The duties of the chorists are to preach, to hear confessions, and to study. The office of the lay-brother is to serve and to do whatever he is commanded. Understand well, that serving at table and washing dishes are the duties of the lay-brothers; sometimes and only *sometimes* the chorists may perform these duties, but only to make them practise humility.

Well now; do not cause me any more displeasure; I love you as brothers, but I wish you to become holy. Of what use is it to enter the Congregation, if you do not wish to become saints? Now the virtues that are necessary for your sanctification are, humility, obedience, and patience; without suffering there can be no true sanctity.

I bless all the Brothers who have a good intention, and I curse those who have a bad intention; and remember that my curse will be accompanied by that of Jesus Christ.

Live Jesus, Joseph, Mary, and Teresa!

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 234.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

He again refers to the treatment to be given to the lay-brothers to prevent subsequent disorders.

Live Jesus, Joseph, Mary, and Teresa!

NOCERA, January 16, [1756].

I believe that I have written to you in regard to the Brothers, that they should make the common acts in the evening in winter during which the days are short, and that they must do without the hour of repose as it is permitted only to the chorists.

Now in reference to the hour of repose my wish is that you inform the Brothers that half an hour, if not a whole hour, of rest will be granted to those that need it. In this matter you must be governed by prudence. At all events the practice of the Brothers taking an hour's rest in winter must be stopped, since it is permitted only to those that study.

I recommend to you, besides, that you take care that the Brothers nearly always wait at table and wash the dishes. It will suffice that the students do this work once or twice a month. Exhort these Brothers not to murmur, since those that did so at Ciorani are now suffering punishment, and will have to suffer it for some time to come.

In future, I shall probably not admit the Brothers to profession till after a probation of ten years. Tell, therefore, the new Brother of Grazioli [1] that I will receive him, but only on condition, now imposed on all others, that he must serve as a secular for several years — at least during four years — before it will be permitted him to enter the novitiate. Your Reverence must not, therefore, during

1 Probably a new Brother admitted on the recommendation of D. Benedetto Grazioli of Atella.

your Rectorate, apply to me for permission to give him the habit.

As for those that have already received the habit and that are to be professed, you must inform me of the least faults that they commit, as I may perhaps defer their profession. These good Brothers, after they have made their profession, are apt to become proud. Live Jesus, Joseph, Mary, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 235.

To Father Girolamo Ferrara,[1] Minister of the House at Iliceto.

He declares his intentions relative to the religious profession of the lay-brothers.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

PAGANI, January 18, 1756.

Brother N. wishes to enter the novitiate according to what he writes to me. Tell him that he may enter for some time, say two or three months, according as you think proper.

Tell, moreover, the novice-brothers, who have or who have not yet received the habit (and tell each one in particular, each time, so as to prevent the forming of plans), that I have no intention to admit to profession the lay-brothers except after a very long trial of their virtue. For this purpose take care to gather information, mark down on paper and send it to me, what are the particular defects of the lay-brothers that are in your house, so that I may

[1] Father Ferrara, born June 9, 1715, made his profession, March 25, 1748. He was a learned man and rendered many services to St. Alphonsus in the publishing of his works. How excellent his life was may be inferred from the words of the holy Founder, who called him a man *dead to his own will*. Father Ferrara died, August 22, 1767 at S. Agata de' Goti.

use your report as a legitimate pretext when they asked me to admit them to profession. It has been remarked that these good Brothers after their profession begin to relax in their fervor and that they become very imperfect. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

As for Brother N., it is well that he enters the novitiate; but in order to receive the habit, he will have to wait a long time. What I have said in regard to others, I also say in regard to him; for if I am indulgent towards him, I shall be obliged to be so towards others.

I bless you all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 236.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

Expression of disapprobation on the subject of the mission given at Potenza. — Conditions essentially required that missions, and above all important missions, may be accepted.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, 19, [January, 1756].

First remark. It appears that a mission is to be given at Potenza. I had already refused this mission, and I therefore do not understand why you accepted it.

I have said to myself, and I say so again: This mission at Potenza, in view of the number of subjects whom you will employ and the inconveniences that they will suffer, will be for you an occasion of a conspicuous failure. You yourself, my dear Father, are suffering from a severe cold in the chest; on the other hand, Potenza is a place where the cold is extreme. I really cannot understand how you can go there.

I beg you, therefore, that as soon as you can travel and you have had a favorable journey, return to *Mater Domini* (Caposele) and do what the physician tells you. If he

orders you to go to bed, remain in bed till your cold has disappeared; for a cold so obstinate might kill you, or at least disable you for the future. For the sake of one mission you might render yourself unfit for all the missions that you might give afterwards.

As for this mission at Potenza, I should have wished you had first spoken to me; I should have examined whether it would prove successful. For this work you would need fourteen or fifteen of the best subjects; as the city is a difficult place to preach in. But the date has already been fixed; what is to be done? — I do not forbid you to give the mission, but I say that it might easily be dropped; you are in fact too few, and several among you are still young. If then it were possible to put it off till the next year, it would be preferable. For the rest, I refer the matter to Father Fiocchi; but tell him from me that when there is question of so large and so important missions, I wish to be informed in advance.

Since you tell me not to send either of the two Brothers, I will not send him. But you must know that the Brother for whom you asked us is not fit to transact business outside of the convent.

Father Fiocchi (I see from his letter) wishes to have Father Cimino. At present I will write that he should be sent if this can be done; but you may be sure that he will not come. In fact, missions that have been engaged and promised are to be given at Ariano, and without Cimino it will be impossible to give them. You see what happens when we thus accept at random missions, and difficult missions.

Read to Father Fiocchi all that I have just written, that is, all that regards this mission at Potenza which has given me so much annoyance. All could have been arranged if you had sent me word. Now you are to go back to the

convent; Father Cimino will surely not come: indeed that will be a fine mission that is going to be given!

As for Father Apice, if he also suffers from his chest, *I do not wish, I do not wish, I do not wish* him to preach the evening sermon. When we have lost a subject, all the inhabitants of Potenza would not be able to restore him to us.

This then would be my opinion: It being now settled that you cannot take part in this mission, that Father Apice is also suffering, and that Cimino cannot come, Father Fiocchi would have a good reason to withdraw his word in regard to Potenza. He should simply write: Several Fathers have fallen ill, and the others are engaged.

Steps have been taken to give the mission at Potenza, but as for the missions to be given at Conza, asked for by the Archbishop [Mgr. Nicolai], have they been given or not? — I do not wish the missions at Conza to be omitted in order to give other missions. Why do you wish to make the archbishop indisposed towards us?

Don Benedetto Grazioli writes to me that he is most anxious to have the consolation, that at the baptism of a child expected by him from day to day, Father Margotta should fulfil the duties of parish priest and Father Fiocchi those of sponsor. I am sending a messenger to Naples to have Father Margotta come, since I cannot refuse this consolation to Don Benedetto, and I dispense from the Rule in this case. Tell then Father Fiocchi to put off the day on which he is to go to Atella; or rather, I am going to write to Don Benedetto that at the desired moment he should send for Father Fiocchi. The latter, when he arrives at Atella should ask Don Benedetto (as I have already written to him) to send at once to Benevento the whole amount that he wishes to give; for if he sends it little by little, it will be used in paying the expenses of the

building, and the house would derive no income that would assure its future.

Grazioli writes to me that he has sent or will send (I do not well understand him) five hundred ducats for Benevento. If they have reached you, or as soon as they reach you, send them to me in order that I may determine the use to which they should be applied.

I hear at this moment the following piece of news: The mission has begun at Potenza, and notwithstanding your cold in the chest you have begun to preach the evening sermons. *Gloria Patri!* — Here is once for all the general rule: I forbid every one suffering from a cold in the chest or an obstinate cold, I forbid him, I say, to preach the evening sermons, especially in places where people are hard to please; and it matters little whether we give up a mission already begun. You must then examine what is to be done in the present case. Here you see what it is to burn one's vessels without thinking of the future. This mission at Potenza has been of singular torment to me.

In regard to the mission at Capaccio, I hope to provide for it with the subjects of this house; but as to Castellucia, it is incumbent on you to think of it.

To return to the mission at Potenza, I see that my letter will embarrass you. I do not however wish to cause you trouble; this is the reason why I refer the matter to the decision of Father Fiocchi, who will judge what is best to be done. Yet as for risking the health of the subjects, especially that of Father Apice and yours in making you preach in spite of all, I beg Father Fiocchi to be prudent so that I may not grow angry as I fear I shall be obliged to. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

(*Postscript written by the hand of the saint*): I am not

very well; recommend me to Jesus Christ. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the original preserved in one of our houses in the French Province.

LETTER 237.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, at Iliceto.

Mistake to be remedied in the case of a lay-brother. — Punishment inflicted on the guilty ones at Ciorani.

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

NOCERA, January 20, 1756.

I wrote that you should dismiss the novice-brother; but you may have noticed that I was mistaken when I believed that he (as appears I indicated in my letter) had committed some impertinence by employing force to remain in his room. But now I hear that the one who committed this fault was Brother Andrea, who is already professed; him I cannot send away merely on this account, but he deserves a severe penance.

Besides, Brother Bartolomeo, that is, the novice, as I see from the letter of Father Ferrara, did not commit such a fault as to deserve to be dismissed. So I hope that you have understood the mistake and have not yet sent him away.

I have spoken kindly to Brother Giacomo and he confessed his guilt. Hence as regards the penance that he as well as Brother Andrea and all the rest have deserved, I leave all to your Reverence and to Father Ferrara.

I do not write with my own hand, because I have been ill these past four days; I therefore do not write specially to Father Ferrara. It will be sufficient to let him read this letter.

As for Frater [D. Fabrizio] Cimino, his illness is not serious, and I will have him take here some little remedy.

At Ciorani justice [1] has been done. I have dismissed Brother Crescenzo; he had murmured and then refused to do the penance. Brother Carlo and Brother Giuseppe Trombetta of Naples are confined to their rooms [*carcerati*].

All the others that have murmured have been put under penance. Brother Domenico is confined to his room here.

I bless all. Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 238.

To the Same. [2]

He asks him to assist a Brother tempted against his vocation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, January 21, 1756.

Brother N. writes to me that he is disquieted and on the point of losing his vocation; that such a trouble should also come upon us! I have answered him firmly and kindly.

Try if possible to calm him by kind treatment. Allow

[1] In consequence of the unjust complaints of the lay-brothers in the house at Iliceto, the saint took away from the Brothers in all the houses the hour of sleep (*siesta*) during the day. This decision created also a semi-revolution among some of the Brothers in the house at Ciorani. The sad event is thus narrated in the *journal* of Father Pasquale Caprioli: "January 15, owing to some murmurings among the Brothers at Ciorani three of them one at Pagani, and two at Ciorani — were confined to their rooms for eight days. This penance was given to Brothers Carlo, Giuseppe and Domenico; then January 20, Brother Crescenzo of Sarno was dismissed for not wishing to submit to the foregoing penance."

[2] This short letter is a postscript added by him to a letter written to Father Tannoia by a student, Frater Pietro Paolo Blasucci.

him more sleep, if he wishes it. O my God! these Brothers!

Brother N. has asked me to admit him to the novitiate; see whether you can allow him to make a part of it. However, I have told him that no one should speak to me about receiving the habit till the lapse of several years; and as for the vows many years will have to pass by.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 239.

To the Same.

He refuses to dismiss a subject.

[End of January, 1756.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

As for Brother [Bartolomeo] I have no reason to send him away. I first wrote that he should be sent away, but through a mistake I thought that he had done what Brother Andrea has done. I therefore wrote that he should be kept; now how could I send him away?

Let us see how he behaves himself; and if he behaves badly, he may afterwards be dismissed, and then he may feel sorry, but I shall not. I shall feel sorry for my own sins, but not for this act of justice.

You wrote me about the priest of N. that he is suffering from lunacy. Now you write me that this fact is doubtful. You should therefore see (now is the time) whether he is really suffering from such a disease.

I am glad to hear that those that have received the habit [1] are doing well.

I bless all, and especially the novices. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

[1] Those that had just received the habit (January 24, 1756) were the priest D. Gerardo Gisone and the acolyte Giambattista Ansalone.

LETTER 240.

To Father Girolamo Ferrara, at Iliceto.

Conditions required for dismissing a subject.

[End of January, 1756.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I have written to Father Rector on account of Brother Andrea and Brother Bartolomeo.

For pity's sake, let Father Rector not trouble me so much about these Brothers! When I have written and decided something, of what use is it to torment me again about it?

I have already written to him that Brother Bartolomeo should stay; why urge me again to send him away?

After admission *grave* reasons are required to dismiss a subject; and after profession, we must have *very grave* reasons joined with incorrigibility; without this it is a mortal sin to dismiss him.

I bless you all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After an old copy.

LETTER 241.

To Father Gasparo Caione, at the Mission Given at Potenza.

He forbids any postulant to be sent him without his previous permission.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, January 30, 1756.

I received your two letters, and I am greatly surprised to see that you have not received my letter which I recommended to our people at Ciorani to send at once by a messenger. However, you will soon receive it.

The letter contained a complaint about the mission that was begun by you when I had refused to give it at least at

the present time, and when your Reverence and Father Apice were suffering from a cold. I hope to God that in future this may not again happen. You will read the rest in my letter.

I hear now that the mission has been successful. How wonderful! No mission had for a long time been given at Potenza. But it would have succeeded far differently had it been given at the proper time and with a sufficient number of Fathers.[1]

Gloria Patri! Within a short time you have sent us four young men without having first informed us that they would come. From this day forward (and tell this to all most especially) send me no one without having first informed me, and before I have sent a favorable answer.

The two young men have been admitted; but the tall one I had already dismissed because he is only very mediocre, and we are not now in a condition to receive those that are mediocre; there are enough of us, and there is no bread. But then there was so much weeping, and I felt so much compassion for him now that he had made such a journey that the Consultors themselves proposed him to me to admit him.

But we no longer wish to be exposed to receive any more subjects through compassion. And so remember, and I repeat, tell this to all, to send me no one, *no one*, *no one*, if I have not told you that he may come. But all this it seems to me your Reverence already knew.

I bless all. Father Cimino[2] should come here immediately after the mission at Rocca is finished, because a

[1] The city of Potenza is an episcopal See, and had at that time a population of 6585 souls.

[2] It appears that D. Fabrizio Cimino because of his illness, of which mention is made in a letter of the 20th of this month, was sent for a change of air to the mission at Rocca. In this letter he is called Father, but it seems that he was not yet a priest, having been born March 29, 1733.

great deal is to be done; and I would also wish that Father de Meo should come.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 242.

To Father Francesco Pentimalli. [1]

He exhorts him to perfect obedience.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA February 11. [1756?]

My dear Francesco: I have learned with pleasure that you have recovered from your illness; but I was somewhat pained to hear that you have given to the Superior and to your brethren an answer that was rather sharp.

Many things may appear to us preposterous, which are nevertheless right for us, when they have been dictated by obedience. If every subject wished to do what seemed best to him, there would be at end to obedience.

I beg you then to be patient when certain things seem to you to be what they should not. When you have given your opinion, then become quiet; it will be sufficient that you reserve to yourself the privilege of writing to me or of orally reporting to me what seems to you to be suitable.

I beg you for the rest of the missions to stand by what-

[1] Father Francesco Pentimalli was born, September 20, 1714, at S. Eufemia, in the diocese of Mileto, in Farther Calabria. He had already been ordained priest before entering the novitiate, February 13, 1751; he made his profession in the presence of St. Alphonsus October 2 of the same year. While setting out in company with several other Fathers for the missions of Sicily, he was overtaken by death at his native place, S. Eufemia, November 15, 1761. He was truly an apostolic man of God.

ever the Superior ordains; afterwards, when you return, you may tell me all.

I bless you. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 243.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, at Iliceto.

He sends him different kinds of help.

[February, 1756.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Take care of Frater N. who is suffering from catarrh; see that he does not take cold.

I again send two pounds of chocolate for those that have a cough or have a cold.

I also send ten ducats to help you a little in your distress.

I bless you all, especially the novices. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 244.

To the Same.

Measures to be taken in regard to various subjects.

[February, 1756.]

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

First of all in regard to the Masses of [Father Pasquale] Basile, there is some commotion at our house in Ciorani; [1]

[1] It was customary that when a Father was sent to another house to assist at a mission, he continued to apply the Masses to the intention of the house to which he was ascribed. Father Basile therefore having been sent from Ciorani to help the Fathers at Iliceto should have said Mass to the intention of the house at Ciorani; hence the Fathers at Ciorani created a commotion about which the letter speaks. Whereupon the saint ordered Father Tannoia to remedy this confusion.

I approve of the application of Masses such as you have made for this house. But in regard to the Masses that you have applied to yourself you must by all means have them supplied; because we must keep up the established custom, namely, that the application of the Masses does not change, whatever may be the temporary changes of residence among the subjects.

As for the priest Saltarelli, try to have him go away as soon as possible. Think of some way and of some pretext. However, by all means see that he is sent away at once. And tell him that it is not necessary for him to come here to importune me, because this would be a loss of time, since I have good reasons for believing that the Congregation is not made for him.

As for the physician, what is to be done? There are no such deficiencies, etc. I have written to him. Read the letter that I am sending to him, and then give it to him.

As to the young man of Resina, since he is suffering from pains in the limbs, there is no reason why he should stay in the Congregation. Tell him that all our houses are very cold, and he would thereby soon lose his health. Induce him to go away. I feel sorry for him, for he is a good young man; but there is no remedy; God does not wish him to be in the Institute.

I say the same thing in regard to the two other young men from Ischia and Bosco. They are good, but not good for us.

Say, however, to these two that I do not dismiss them altogether; I wish only that they should go home and re-establish their health; for as soon as they have become well, I will receive them; and so let them go away with this certain hope. Send them away, however, in their secular dress.

As for Frater [D. Francesco Antonio] de Paola I have ordered that he should be sent.

I bless you all. Live Jesus and Mary!

In regard to the two Brothers, Saverio and Domenico, if they do not do what they should, they will be dismissed without fail. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 245.

To the Same.

Project of a foundation at Matera.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NAPLES, March 6, 1756.

As soon as Father Villani arrives tell him it is impossible for me to send Father Amarante, as we are overburdened with work, which even with Father Amarante's assistance we can hardly accomplish; the mission is very large. Nor is it possible to send any students, for I do not wish them to be taken away from the study of Moral Theology; otherwise they will not be able to go out on future missions.

The house at Benevento had too many missions this year.

Touching the matter of Matera,[1] I do not desire to say anything either to favor the undertaking or to hinder it,

[1] Tannoia tells us in his "Life of St. Alphonsus" (Book ii. chap. xxxix.) that King Charles had proposed to the saint to undertake the reform of an ancient and respectable Order. "According to the king's plan, St. Alphonsus and his companions were to take the habit and the name of this Order without, however, relinquishing the observance of their own Rule; moreover, they were to give missions in the same manner as hitherto, and to act in every matter as it should seem best to the saint." Thus far Tannoia; it appears to us this affair of Matera and the reform proposed by the king are identical.

because it will be difficult for us to find later on a foundation as advantageous as that, and even to have another foundation in the kingdom under like circumstances. This reasoning appears to me to be just. However, God will help us, and I shall not accept it until I see everything well arranged. But the affair will hardly be allowed at Rome, since there is danger of giving offence to a great religious body.

All that I have said has also been admitted by the Cardinal [Sersale], who has also promised not to throw any impediment in the way.

Tell also Father Villani that I recommend to him among others the young man from Torrecuso.[1]

Should D. Andrea [Villani] not come in time to receive this news, you will please write it to him, and thus spare my head, which God knows how it fares when I am eating nothing. There is nothing else. May you keep well! Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

(*Postcript written by the secretary*): Father Rector Major says that the person sent by Don Benedetto Grazioli may stay as long as he wishes.

The young man from Panni is always writing to me; see whether you can grant his request.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] This candidate from Torrecuso, in the archdiocese of Benevento, was young Giuseppe Maffei. He was admitted to the novitiate May 1 of this year.

LETTER 246.

To Sister Maria Nicoletta Leoni (Di Calvanico), in the Monastery of Fisciano.

He earnestly recommends to her to resign herself to the will of God.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NAPLES, March 9, [1756].

Your letter has reached me here at Naples. I shall say the Mass for you to-morrow; but you may be sure the Madonna will not obtain for you the grace that you desire, because your prayer has mistaken its object.

You should ask for patience and not for health; and even this last, it seems to me, you ask with but little resignation. If in asking for patience, or at least for health, you were resigned to God's will, you would more easily obtain both.

Do what I tell you: Ask in future that you may be able to bear patiently not only sickness but the contempt that you receive from your Sisters. To suffer as Jesus Christ has suffered, to suffer and to be despised to suffer even without exciting the compassion of any one, can anything be more meritorious for gaining Paradise?

Think of it: with the numerous infirmities which you suffer, your life will be but little prolonged. Try then to provide for merits during the short time that still remains to you.

Drive far from you the horrible temptation of leaving the monastery. Ah! do you wish to run the risk of losing your soul?

Now that you have read this letter kneel down, or even from your bed, make to God an entire offering of yourself, and beg him to treat you as he pleases. Unite also your

pains and your annoyances to those that Jesus Christ had to suffer.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 247.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

Solicitude of the saint for the house at Iliceto and for the health of the students.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NAPLES, March 20, [1756].

The first thing that I have to ask you, my dear Gasparo, is to take up again the work on Scripture. I am not exactly pleased with it myself.[1] Yet it is after all Scripture; at least in Communities it may be of great benefit.

Secondly; at Iliceto the novices are in want of the necessaries of life, and are suffering very great misery. I have, therefore, been thinking of removing them from that place. For the present I have ordered to be sent to them ten ducats from Ciorani and five from Pagani; I now ask you to send when you can ten more ducats.

As for Frater Michele [de Michele], I do not wish that he should study. It will do no good if he has a relapse, and we shall lose all that we have gained. It will be sufficient if he sometimes goes to class and listens a little to what is said. Let him walk out and take exercise. After Easter send him to the missions that are to be given with Father Fiocchi, at first at S. Angelo, etc.

Tell Frater Castaldo that I participate in the consolations

[1] This work on Scripture did not please him as it gave only the literal sense. See Letter of January 11, 1756.

that he enjoys; let him pray to God for me. I do not send him a special answer as I am about ascending the pulpit to preach.

I have promised you Father Fiocchi for a change; but being here I do not know what arrangements have been made by the Fathers of Nocera and Ciorani to whom I have intrusted the giving of all the spiritual exercises.

Here much good is done by the Congregation. I bless you all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 248.

To Sister Maria di Gesù, Carmelite at Ripacandida.

Counsels regarding observance and resignation.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

PAGANI, April 22, 1756.

In answering your letter I am using the hand of another to write to you, for it is only a little while ago that I recovered from serious illness.[1] Here is my answer in a few words.

[1] After having spent at Naples six or seven weeks, occupied with the affairs of the Congregation and preaching with an indefatigable zeal, St. Alphonsus returned to Nocera de' Pagani to spend there Holy Week, to contemplate according to his custom the mysteries of the Passion of our Lord. He had scarcely returned when he fell dangerously ill, and his illness lasted from April 10 to 17, that is, from the Saturday before Palm Sunday till Holy Saturday. "It would be a fine thing," he said, "to die during Holy Week," and he repeated three times the words: "Oh, what a fine thing would it be to die in Holy Week! for my illness is serious," he added. Father Caprioli having answered: "Let us leave it all to God," "yes," said the saint, "what God wishes I also wish, and his good pleasure is mine." On the first day of his illness he had one of the students, Frater Buonassisa, to read to him the *Proficiscere anima christiana*, — Depart, Christian soul — and on hearing it he cried out: *Oh, what beautiful prayers, what beautiful pearls of Paradise!* Before going

In the state in which you are you have nothing else to do than to observe the Rule and to show zeal for its observance. Then you should without ceasing offer yourself to God and be resigned to his will in whatever state he may wish to put you.

I feel extremely grateful to you for remembering me in your prayers; for my part I am doing the same for you. Continue, I beg you, to do so during the few days of life that still remain to you.

I shall do what I can to intercede for you [with the Bishop of Melfi] to have Communion restored to you; but I must wait for a favorable opportunity. In the mean time be resigned in everything; this is what Jesus Christ wishes.

Salute all the Sisters for me, but especially the Mother Prioress; let her have the charity to recite during nine consecutive days the *Salve Regina* on account of two grave matters that concern the Congregation. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 249.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, at Iliceto.

Confirmation of an order already given.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, May 2, [1756].

Yes, it is understood, only Nigro [1] should pass to the study of philosophy as we have agreed upon. When a thing has been said, why repeat it? Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

to bed he said to some sick persons who had come to see him: "Love Jesus Christ and do his will, as I wish to do myself by going to bed." — These edifying details are drawn from an account written by Father Giuseppe Melchionna.

[1] Lorenzo Nigro had made his profession the preceding day.

LETTER 250.

To the Same.

Request that he should work at the *Constitutions*. — Various measures.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, May 11, [1756].

Before all things, I beg you to set your hand to the Constitutions at once and as often as you can; for they should be read in the houses where they are little known, else it might be said that they are not obligatory because they are not published. Finish them as soon as you can, with the assistance of Father Ferrara, just as the Chapter has ordained. Be very careful to preserve the original copies, so that one may consult them whenever a difficulty arises.

In respect to allowing you to have the Blessed Sacrament in the oratory of the novitiate, I have always felt some repugnance. It is true, after your arrival from Naples I appeared to consent to having it kept there; but at present I am confronted by another difficulty. Meditation is made in the choir, the visit is made in the choir, what need is there still of the Blessed Sacrament in the novitiate? It affords you consolation, you will say; but have patience, deprive yourself of this consolation. If you have not placed the Blessed Sacrament there, you had better not do so; and if it be there, you must take it away.

All is going on well: Nigro and de Sanctis go to Caposele [to begin philosophy]; de Paola remains at Iliceto. Passari and de Gattis can also remain there to perfect themselves; they can begin their rhetoric and logic in a short time.

For the study of rhetoric take Cuione.

You are right: there was no cause for sending these students to Caposele.

I have asked more than once for that book on the Madonna ["The Glories of Mary"] and the Brother has received nothing. Send it to me as soon as you find it convenient.

For the humanities, books will be sent from here, and I will write to Ciorani; a copy of *Calepino* of Torino will be kept here, because we need it.

I am answering Perez. Read the letter I have written to him. Instead of having him make fifteen days retreat before receiving the habit, it will be sufficient if he makes ten.

A safe journey to Vitelli and Pica! [1]

I bless the profession of Paravento and Leggio;[2] tell them from me to practise humility; watch them carefully.

I bless the novices and all the others. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Father Margotta writes me that you wish to pay a part of the expenses of the printing of the "Glories of Mary," and while the book is being printed you will have nothing to eat! Live Jesus and Mary!

What I now add, you must keep secret and allow no one to know except Father Ferrara. Father N. will come to you in June for the purpose of recollecting himself as he says; but would to God he would truly recollect himself and would not peruse books without caring about the observance!

Now you must know that I have expressly forbidden him to hear the confessions of women or to speak with them. Hence do not allow him to be called for this purpose; and if he be called, forbid him to hear the confessions of women even if they be dying. I have been

[1] Vitelli and Pica were two novices who had been sent away.

[2] Giuseppe Paravento and Isidoro Leggio made their profession June 3.

obliged to come to such a decision in regard to him on account of his extravagant notions. I have written you a longer letter on the subject and have sent it by way of Bovino; try to procure it, and destroy it after having read it. Say nothing of all this to N. except in a case of necessity, and unless you see him hearing confessions of women. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original, the property of D. M. Alfonso Lombardi in Cimitile, diocese of Nola.

LETTER 251.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

Various matters. — The sending of a little work composed by the saint.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, May 16, [1756].

I am glad to hear the news about the mission at S. Angelo. I have already heard about it through [D. Benedetto] Grazioli. I will say Mass for the Abbess of S. Maria di Troia, and will write to Father Villani.

As for Father N., let him go to Iliceto where he wishes to go to recollect himself, because he has been exposed to a great deal of dissipation.

I have written to you another letter in which I say to you that I forbid N. under the formal precept of obedience to hear the confessions of any more women; hence do not allow him to be called to hear women's confessions when he comes to your house to give the exercises; and even if you see him hear the confessions of women you must forbid him to do so. Let him then go to Iliceto. When afterwards these young men have finished their course, I will send you some one else to replace him. This treatment of Father

N. has been found to be necessary because of his extravagances. Keep this, however, as a secret.

Frater Contaldo should be sent as soon as possible to Iliceto for a change of air.

If Father N. comes to your house, Father Pentimalli will not come. Have patience then, and do the best you can.

If I mistake not Father Pentimalli has to go to Lauro. Father Apice has been promised to Iliceto. Have an understanding with Iliceto, but if not, how will they be able to get out of their difficulties? Father Apice must necessarily go to this house.

I bless you all. I can scarcely write on account of my head. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Here is a letter which Father Pentimalli's brother writes to me; try to satisfy him. Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] I send you some copies of my little work [1] written *against unbelievers*. Two are bound in parchment; give one to the archpriest of Caposele, the other to the Vicar with my compliments. The other two are for your house. Live Jesus and Mary!

If it is not really necessary I beg you not to take Brother Mattia [2] from his clocks; for now I hear that he has been sent to accompany the Fathers on a mission.

After the original preserved in our house at Pagani.

[1] This little work published during this year, 1756, bears the title: "Breve dissertazione contro gli errori dei moderni increduli, oggidì nominati Materialisti e Deisti." (A brief dissertation against the errors of modern unbelievers called to-day Materialists and Deists.)

[2] The lay-brother Mattia Fazzano was a skilful clock and watchmaker; the saint, therefore, did not wish him to accompany the Fathers on their missions, as the Brother probably had to make clocks for the houses.

LETTER 252.

To Sister Maria Nicoletta Leoni (Di Calvanico), in the Monastery of Fisciano.

He reproves her for her continual impatience, and exhorts her to be a true nun who is entirely resigned to God's will.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, May 19, [1756].

I have received your letter with the stipend for a Mass, and I will comply with your intentions. As for paying you a visit, I beg you, should you write again, not to mention such a thing, for it would give me useless annoyance. I hardly ever leave the house; I do not even accept the invitations that I receive from the convents of Nocera, which are quite near. How could I go to Fisciano?

Moreover, if I went to see you I would say nothing more than what I have repeated to you more than once, and I should gain nothing with the religious of your convent, though you may think otherwise.

As for confessors, there will be no lack of them. But one thing is more necessary to you than confessors: it is patience, or rather the love of Jesus Christ.

The saints have loved Jesus Christ and have had other sufferings than you have; they have had to bear other sorrows, other diseases, other kinds of contempt and of abandonment than you have to bear. Yet they believed that they were suffering nothing when they reflected that a God died for us in an ocean of contempt and of sorrow.

Hence all the trouble that you have is caused by yourself when you complain about everything and show so little patience.

In short, what will you find at the hour of death, which in view of your maladies is not far off? You will find only acts of impatience and sins; only venial sins, I hope, but

these may lead you farther if your impatience goes on increasing.

Well, now! take counsel of your crucifix, look upon it often, and offer to our Lord what you suffer. Your evils would be changed into pearls of Paradise, but they are changed through your fault into so many thorns, and into sins which you will have to expiate in the flames of purgatory.

When then will you write to me that for once you will with God's help bear patiently all your trials? When you feel yourself weighed down by affliction, cast immediately a glance at the crucifix, have recourse to our Lady of Sorrows, and always ask this good Mother for this one grace, that she should obtain for you resignation to the will of God.

I entreat you, do not again write to me the words that you have used, together with the interminable lamentations: *I cannot bear this any longer. Such treatment is too much to bear*, and the like. If I mistake not, you suffer less from your corporal pains than from the contempt that is heaped upon you; your want of humility is, therefore, it seems to me, more than anything else the source of your trials. Here is my little work, the *Visits*, a new edition; I send it to you that you may read the little treatise on the *will of God* which is added to it (see page 209). Read it little by little, and when you have finished it, begin again.

Oh, if you would embrace with all your heart the will of God! If you were persuaded that in accepting your pains with an entire resignation, you would rejoice the heart of God, and with what joy, with what love would you endure them! Hence, when you feel yourself more than usually weighed down, I beg you to re-read this letter.

May God grant you his light and his love! He that loves God does not suffer; he rejoices even in suffering.

Perhaps you will tell me: *But I am not a saint.* I

answer: You are not a saint and you do not wish to be a saint. Do you wish to become a saint amidst tenderness and consolations? And if you do not wish to become a saint, why did you leave the world? Did you perhaps enter the convent to be served and honored, and not to suffer? What would you say to one of your Sisters who would complain to you? What you would say to her, say to yourself; offer, offer all to Jesus Christ, and ask him without intermission, not that your trials may cease, but that you may have his love and may be patient. This is the way to transform all your pains into pearls of Paradise.

In order to write you this letter I had to snatch a moment from my numerous occupations.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 253.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, at Iliceto.

He blames indiscreet zeal and gives various counsels regarding the novitiate.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

PAGANI, May 25, 1756.

I have received information about the affair from Father Rizzi.[1]

If things remain in the same state, and Monsignor is

[1] Father Rizzi had written to his penitent Mgr. Tommaso Pacelli Bishop of Bovino, a letter in which he reminded the prelate of his duties, telling him that the people of the diocese were greatly dissatisfied with him. This indiscreet letter so angered the bishop that he wished to imprison this zealous, but too imprudent Father.

not pacified, so that we may have to fear that he will put the Father into prison, send him to Caposele without losing a moment.

Tell, however, this Father that he did not do well to write that letter. He wrote it through zeal; but he does not know that it is forbidden to us outside of the confessional to meddle with affairs that may cause embarrassment to others. For the love of God let him in future give up such kind of zeal. We must think of the general good of the Congregation rather than of the good of others.

As for the question about the Blessed Sacrament in the oratory of the novitiate, I wish to consider the matter more fully with my Consultors, and when Father Fiocchi returns, I shall send him thither immediately to give you the answer to this as well as to some other questions.

Tell Frater N. that the three young men have presented themselves. He knows that Andrea will not suit us, for he does not understand enough Latin, and at Naples I told him that he would not be received.

As for the other youth, I mean N., there is a difficulty, for it is not known where he is to be ordained.

Finally, another young man came; but he had no patrimony. I shall therefore send the two candidates who have received the votes of the Consultors.

When Father Fiocchi comes, he will give you the answers to other questions. Please give the enclosed letter to Frater Perez.

Send immediately a copy of my book [*Dissertation on the Errors of Modern Unbelievers*] to Canon Vitale at Bisaccia. Tell Father Rizzi to say three *Hail Marys* as a penance.

[Father Francesco] Pentimalli must come without fail to Ciorani, even though they desire to keep him at Caposele. Give yourself therefore no trouble about him. I have written to Caposele to send you at least Father [Andrea]

Strina who preaches very well, and Father [Stefano] Liguori: and so you will be able to do your work.

I am now engaged in writing to Mgr. di Bovino, and I hope to appease him. Father Rizzi should have mentioned those points to the bishop when he heard the latter's confession; he should not have written him a letter.

If Father Fiocchi arrives here in time, I will send him immediately. Say no more about this. As soon as I can have him I shall send him to you; I have sent to Ciorani for him and have called him away from the exercises that he is giving, at Ciorani in order to please you.

I repeat: If matters are now settled, it is not necessary to send Father Rizzi to Caposele; if Monsignor should come to the house, it would be well for Father Rizzi to go to him privately, to throw himself at his feet and beg pardon for his indiscretion.

Let Frater [Michele] Ferrazzano become a little stronger and healthier before speaking of making his profession. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Father Margotta tells me that you wish to contribute towards paying the expenses of the Madonna ["Glories of Mary"]; but where is the money? Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the Neapolitan edition of 1848.

LETTER 254.

To Sister Maria di Gesù, Carmelite at Ripacandida.

Explanations regarding spiritual direction.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

PAGANI, June, 1756.

I have read your very long letter, and I answer it in a few words.

I expect within a few days Father Fiocchi, who is to go

to Naples; I must first hear him and examine afterwards what I can do to oblige you.

While waiting, place yourself entirely at the disposition of God for his greater glory; now it is for the greater glory of God to do his most holy will.

Present my respects to the Mother Prioress, to Sister Maria Giuseppe, to Sister Maria Celeste, and to all the rest. Let all recommend me to Jesus Christ; for I repeat, I wish to do what I can to be useful to you, but I must first hear what Father Fiocchi has to say.

I am fully persuaded that he did not withdraw on account of some disobedience on your part or on the part of the other religious, but for some other important reason. Who knows what the Bishop [of Melfi] has told him! Perhaps out of regard for the Carmelites? I do not know what to say in this matter.

However, if Father Fiocchi returns to you, you must be satisfied with the little that he can do; for you know that our Rule expressly forbids us the direction of religious, either in general or in particular. Be satisfied with the counsel that is given to you every time that an occasion presents itself.

In the mean time follow the advice that Father Fiocchi has given you; and if anything new occurs, do nothing exteriorly without the order of the Superior. As for interior things, to remove every doubt, it will be sufficient to say: My God, I wish only Thee and Thy good pleasure; say nothing more.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 255.

To a Father of the House at Ciorani.

He sends pecuniary aid to the poor house of Iliceto.

[June 3, 1756.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

My dear L.: Have patience; it is necessary that you should go to Iliceto where the spiritual exercises are to be given to the candidates for ordination as there is no one to help to give them.

I send you secretly thirty ducats: carry them to the Superiors of Iliceto for the purchase of food, because I hear that they are in embarrassed circumstances.

You must not say anything to others about these thirty ducats; but you must tell them at Iliceto to celebrate seventy-two Masses to the intention of those that have given the money. Take out of this sum of thirty ducats what will pay the expenses of your journey. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I bless all the novices. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 256.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, at Iliceto.

How he was to act in regard to an imprudent subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

June 3, [1756].

Father N. through his extravagances has thrown me into the greatest confusion.

Forbid him to say Mass till the 15th of this month; after that let him again say Mass. But, for pity's sake, do not employ him too much in preaching, nor let him go out too often. Make him remain at home to recollect himself and

to regain a little fervor; for it was for this reason that I sent him to you.

Tell him that I command under formal obedience that he shall no longer hear women's confessions, nor the confessions of young persons under seventeen years of age. He may hear the confessions of men and of boys who have completed their seventeenth year; for I have heard that by his extravagant questions he has taught young persons certain things of which they were ignorant, and now they complain of this. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 257.

To the Same.

He prescribes to the novices moderation in prayer, and expresses his sorrow on account of their poverty.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, June 24, 1756.

I have received from the novices a package of letters expressive of their thanks for having allowed them the Blessed Sacrament.[1] I hear, however, that they go to excess, and that they have already begun to make themselves sick, as, for instance, N. N., etc.

I beg you to moderate their prayers in the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament.

It is sufficient if they make the ordinary visit by adding to it, in the evening and during the day, one or two other visits that must not last longer than half of a quarter of an hour.

This is understood of days outside of the retreat days.

I do not answer the letters of the novices; for it would take me two months to answer them.

[1] The permission, namely, of having the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel of the novitiate.

I hear that at your house you have no soup at your meals. Why do you not send to Ascoli since you have four animals for riding? It would be well to send to the environs for a little wheat, etc., but the misfortune is to know whom to send.

On the subject of cheese, all are opposed to Father N.; and in other houses they continue to give it. But as to your house, what can we do? Should we wish to witness some scene? It is better for you to dissimulate, and to be guided by prudence.

I see that Father N. has told me the truth; for there is truly no way of living in that place. Now I send you a little help; but afterwards what can be done? It is a heart-rending spectacle thus to see the sufferings of so many young persons that have just left the world!

As for Brother N. although he has made his vows, keep him near you, so that his health may improve. He may do some light work that Father N. may assign to him.

Please to send from time to time to Ascoli or elsewhere to procure the wherewithal to make a little soup [*minestra*]. I bless you all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 258.

To the Same.

He complains of the useless expenses incurred in the house at Iliceto.

[End of June, 1756.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I write by the hand of another, since I cannot do so myself on account of my head.

Father N. writes that in fifteen days you will not know what to do, since you are without grain, without wine, without cheese, without lard, and without money, for the

reason that the thirty ducats sent you have been given to Maffei.

As for myself, I really do not know what to do. It will be impossible for me to force the other houses to send you money. Reflect on some means, think of what might be done, and speak about the matter to Father N. Examine whether it is necessary to abandon Iliceto in order not to see our young people die of starvation.

I beg you to be in all that you do as much as possible in accord with Father N.; for otherwise it will be impossible to navigate the little vessel.

I bless you all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 259.

To the Same.

New complaints in regard to useless expenses.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

July 4, [1756].

Briefly, when I receive news from Iliceto it seems to me that each time I must swallow a cup of poison. The other day assistance was sent, and it disappeared immediately. Now something again has been sent, and I hear that it has also disappeared. Father N. wishes to construct a cistern, and you wish to be the architect; and for this purpose Father N. says beams are needed.

I therefore say again and again that it is my wish that no expenses should be incurred except for what is absolutely necessary, namely, for food and the necessary clothing; for you are in want of linen, of bread, etc.

How often have I not forbidden the incurring of extraordinary expenses! And now I learn that you wish to buy planks on credit. On credit, and without the means of paying for them! . . . . Have patience; think only of your

support for the morrow, and of nothing else. I feel like dying with compassion for these young people. I repeat: At present think only of keeping alive. I shall assemble my Consultors to find out what means may be employed; [1] for it is impossible for the little vessel to sail on in this way.

I bless you all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 260.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector at Caposele.

He reprimands him. — Theological reasons in favor of ordination *titulo patrimonii*.

[Beginning of July, 1756?]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I can no longer dissemble; I will tell the truth. That you have sent Father Apice (and may God prevent you from sending another!) to San Gregorio has pierced my heart, the more so since you had at first resolved to write to me, and afterwards you did just the contrary. My God! to send a subject that costs us our blood, to die in a sickly place during the great heats, and at a time when there is an epidemic raging!

But, he is needed there. — True, but all the priests are not dead; there is always one remaining that can give absolution. For pity's sake, in future, and before doing any of these extraordinary things write to me.

It is necessary to obey the Archbishop [of Conza] but *cum grano salis* [with some allowance], in those things in which we are obliged to obey.

I am starting for Naples to-day, and God knows what

[1] The means employed was to transfer the novitiate to Nocera. This occurred July 18, and the novitiate remained there till October 15, of the following year.

sorrow and pain I feel on account of what you have written to me. May God be propitious to us!

See that Father Apice procures as quickly as possible the letters dimissory for those young men, and tell him to let the Vicar-General understand in a very gentle way that he has not acted very charitably towards us, by refusing to recognize the title of patrimony when all the other Vicars made no difficulty about it.

We are rendering service to the universal Church. According to a *Papal Brief* we are allowed to be ordained with a patrimony; added to this, we are engaged in serving the diocese of Conza. Still the most cogent reason is that we are working for the universal Church, and that the universal Church has already approved of our ordination under the title of a patrimony.

If there should happen to be a Father at present at S. Gregorio, recall him immediately. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO.

(*Postscript by another hand*): As our Father was on the point of setting out, he requested me to add a few more reasons in favor of the admission of the patrimony.

In the first place, the permission of the Sovereign Pontiff, according to our Rule, allows us to ordain our subjects with a patrimony. Then we have the permission of his Majesty, who considers us very useful in the kingdom on account of the houses which we have; for under that title we shall not be a burden to him; we know that as a general thing he refuses this title in order not to multiply the number of useless priests.

Again, the Concordat does not take the privilege from us; for according to the terms of that document it is left to the judgment of the bishop to ordain with a patrimony when he sees it would be useful for the Church, without specifying the particular church of those who are to be

ordained. Hence Mgr. Borgia says that it is his custom to ordain a number of priests in a place where there is no want of priests, in order to be able to transfer them afterwards to places where they are needed. Thus we see that he ordains according to the need or utility of the Church, not of the church of the *one who is ordained*, but of the *one that ordains*. This practice is also in accordance with the Council of Trent [*Sess.* xxi. cap. ii.] which gives to the bishop the faculty of ordaining clerics under the title of a patrimony, if he thinks it useful and necessary for his churches: remark here the wording *suarum* [his churches], that is, the churches of the bishop, and not *illorum* [their churches], that is, the churches of those *that have been ordained*. Supposing all this, who can deny that the Fathers of our Congregation are useful to the churches of the Archbishop of Conza, seeing that he uses us as he wishes?

Father Villani had intended to write these points to you; but learning that I had done so, he omitted sending them to you.

After the original to be found partly in our house at Mons, Belgium, partly in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 261.

To the Council of Ecclesiastical Affairs.

The saint solicits the legal approbation of his Institute, and he refutes the objections that could be raised against it.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NAPLES, July, [1756]. [1]

Since the year 1732, the priest Don Alfonso de Liguori and other priests, have learned by giving missions the

[1] "In the beginning of July" — says Tannoia — "Alphonsus went again to Naples. He was most anxious to see his Congregation better established and secured by royal authority, and to obtain the

great spiritual need of the people in the country, and especially of those living in hamlets and small towns of this kingdom; and on the other hand, how little is the assistance that they receive from the missions that are given from Naples. These priests have, therefore, united and have by giving missions applied themselves to the spiritual care of these abandoned people.

To carry out this work, the first house was erected in the diocese of Salerno, and then with the permission of the king, three other houses were founded in the dioceses of Nocera, Bovino and Conza.

Afterwards, in the year 1749, at the instance of the bishops of said dioceses, the reigning Pontiff, knowing the benefit and necessity of this work, a decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council having been previously issued, approved by an apostolic Brief this Institute in the form of a Congregation under the title of the Most Holy Redeemer, subjecting it to the diocesan Ordinaries.

The before-mentioned Brief has not been put in execution, as it is still lacking the permission of his Majesty. But in the mean time the aforesaid missionaries have continued to devote themselves to the giving of missions, travelling for nine months in the year through six provinces of this king-

exequatur for the apostolic Brief. On the 10th of the same month he wrote to Father Gasparo Caione: 'Make a novena and have the people to make it for the success of the affair of the approbation.' On the 20th he again wrote: 'I am laboring hard at Naples, but I meet with difficulties. *Let us leave the matter in God's hands.* Make another novena with the discipline every evening, and have the people to make a second novena'... He remained more than a month at Naples; he might have been seen in spite of the burning sun running from the house of one minister to the other. But all in vain; the opinion of Mgr. Galliano prevailed, and under pretence that the king in granting the *exequatur* to the Bull would not be free to suppress the Congregation should it degenerate, the petition was refused." So far Tannoia, Book ii. chap. xliv.

dom, giving about forty missions a year to these poor country people.

The royal clemency of our Sovereign has in the mean time been petitioned that for the good of so many of his vassals, he may deign to grant permission so that this work may be firmly established. Otherwise it will come to nothing, because, on the one hand, the young men who have been called by God to leave their families to live in ecclesiastical Communities, will hardly be induced to enter a Community that is not established with the royal approbation; and on the other hand, those that have entered, on seeing that the approbation is deferred, will be tempted to leave it for fear that after the work has been given up, they would have to live outside of their own homes as well as outside of the Community.

The reasons for making difficulties in granting the royal *exequatur* are the following:

1. That in the kingdom of Naples the number of religious houses already existing is excessive; and that for the spiritual want of souls, the pastors and priests of the country places and the missions that are given from Naples, furnish ample means.

2. That the increase of religious houses is an injury to the interests of the laity because of the purchase of property made by said houses, and because they then remain in the possession of this property.

3. These foundations begin well, but in time they are rather injurious, or at least useless.

To the first objection the reply may be given that although the religious houses in the kingdom might be sufficient and excessive, yet the houses of missionaries that attend to the spiritual culture of the poor people of the country, are very few in proportion to their wants. Everywhere zealous bishops are heard complaining, because they see a great part of their flocks perishing for want of help;

they ask for missions, but they cannot have them, since the missions from Naples do not reach the hundredth part of the wants that exist. There are, it is true, many ecclesiastics (and would to God there were fewer!), but very few of them are good apostolic workers.

To the second objection that the increase of religious houses is prejudicial to laymen we reply that the king has already provided for this, by ordering that the above-mentioned houses of the missionaries cannot acquire any annual income, and that which they possessed in the beginning are administered by the bishops who are to furnish each of the subjects with two *carlini* [1] a day, and all the rest is to be given to the poor of the place. And this supreme disposition of the prince has been resignedly accepted by said missionaries, who were even satisfied with the disposition made by his Majesty. To this must be added that the same exact nothing from their own families; hence it happens that their patrimonial income remains for the benefit of the laity, their relatives.

As for the last objection, that these foundations begin well and then end badly, or remain at least useless, we ask you to cast your eyes not upon all religious houses, but only upon the foundations of missionaries, such as those of the Pious Workers and of the priests called Priests of the Missions, and you will see that these Institutes, although founded more than a century ago, are still useful to the public, either because the obligation of continually laboring keeps them from dissipation and engaged in prayer or study, or because the power of dismissing the negligent being in the hands of the Superiors, it happens that those that remain devote themselves to the work of their Institute.

As, therefore, an experiment of this new Institute of missionaries has been made during the space of twenty-three years, as it has furnished a good number of missionaries, and has

[1] Two *carlini* = fr. 0.85.

already received the approbation of the Sovereign Pontiff, who gathered the most exact information about them, it is hoped that our most pious Monarch by his permission will render this great work perpetual in his kingdom, for it is a work that is devoted to the welfare of his vassals, and that is established to maintain purity of our holy religion, on which even the tranquillity of the State depends.

After an old copy.

LETTER 262.

To Sister Maria Angela Rosa Graziano, in the Monastery of the SS. Rosario at Naples.

He announces to her his early departure from Naples.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NAPLES, [end of July, 1756].

I have not had a moment for myself, occupied as I have been with important affairs of our Congregation. I will leave the city to-morrow in all haste, and when I return to Naples I will send you our Brother [Francesco Tartaglione] to whom you may tell all and give the money.

Recommend me to Jesus Christ, for we are persecuted and endure all kinds of woes. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 263.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce, at Camigliano.

He exhorts her to fervor in the service of God.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, August 3, 1756.

I answer your last letter; it contains nothing important that needs a special answer.

I am only very glad to know that you have been insulted; yet I regret that there was so very little insult, and that the blows were measured instead of being given plentifully.

Do not omit going to Communion, even when you are told a hundred times that you are damned, and that you are a demon. Do not love the less those that show you greater contempt; render them services and pray for them.

In regard to the discipline, omit it when you are ill; but when you recover, resume it, notwithstanding that you have lost strength; take it then at least a little so as not to lose the habit of it. I recommend the same thing in regard to the spiritual reading.

It will be impossible for us to go to Caiazzo. The king does not permit us to have any more foundations; the same prohibition holds good for all religious whoever they may be.

Pray always for me. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of Signor Andrea d' Isa at Camigliano.

LETTER 264.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

Zeal of the saint for regular observance.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, August 6, [1756].

I have just received your letter in reference to the office of Examiner, etc. Father Ferrara tells me that this is only for once, and that there is question of nominating an archpriest at Andretta.[1]

This is sufficient. When you receive the formal letter of the archbishop in regard to the matter, you will take care at first to thank him kindly, and then to excuse yourself by saying that to accept the office you are obliged to write to me and to obtain a dispensation, since such a thing is forbidden by our Constitution. If nevertheless he presses you to accept, and wishes to push the matter, then, as there is question of doing this but once, I dispense you only for this case.

Tell Father Leo from me to give up the idea of again having copies of *Tournely*[2] sent from France. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

[1] Mgr. Giuseppe Nicolai wished Father Caione to be present as Examiner at the *concursus* for the office of archpriest of Andretta.

[2] Father Francesco de Leo was then teaching philosophy, and after the course of philosophy had been finished, having to teach theology to the same students, he wished to procure for us from France a certain number of copies of Tournely's Theology. St. Alphonsus preferred to apply to his publisher, Giuseppe Remondini at Venice, and the latter procured the books in question as one may see in a letter of the saint to Remondini, dated March 14, 1757.

LETTER 265.

To Mother Maria di Gesù, Carmelite at Ripacandida.[1]

The duties of a Prioress. — Various recommendations.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, August 17, 1756.

I answer: Yes, God is worthy of being loved, and he wishes to be loved by you, although you have no director.

You have again been appointed Prioress; the Prioress of a convent should also be *prior* in love, that is to say, the first in loving God, and this is the rule of conduct that I give you.

Since you have received Jesus Christ anew,[2] recommend me to him when you receive him as food; at least on those days on which Communion is not taken from you.

I have written to Mgr. [di Melfi] to permit you to answer Brancone. If this is granted, answer the Marquis that you never forget him in your prayers. Encourage him and say to him that you are praying to the Lord to grant him strength and light to walk on the right road and to defend the interests of the Church in the office that he occupies.

I thank you for the novena that you wished to make for me, and for the remembrance that you have of me. I thank Jesus Christ that he reminds you of me, and I pray to him that he may always remind you of me.

Thank also our Lord for the signal favor that we have just received from the Pope; for he has given us all the

[1] Mother Maria di Gesù had been re-elected Prioress at the end of the month of May, 1756.

[2] The holy nun had been, as we have said, deprived of daily Communion. As we have seen in Letter 248, St. Alphonsus interceded with Mgr. de Melfi to remove this prohibition.

privileges of the Pious Workers and of the Fathers of the Christian Doctrine.[1]

Give the enclosed answers to the Sisters who have written to me; but tell them that when they write, they should not, especially if the letter is somewhat long, expect an immediate answer; for time is wanting to me. I had even to steal the moments to write to you.

In your position, you have nothing else to do than to observe the Rule and to exact its observance. Unite yourself, then, to God by a continual offering of yourself, and in whatever state of soul you may be, humbly resign yourself.

Salute for me all the Sisters, and let all continue to recommend me to Jesus Christ. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 266.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

Exhortation to practise patience.

[NOCERA, month of August, 1756.]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

I have read your letter and said: Alas! that this new misery should come upon us during the festival, and now we are all involved in it.

Your Reverence is asking a Mass from Petrella.[2] — In the first place Petrella has gone to Iliceto. Secondly, you must know that Father Saverio [Rossi] usually talks when he

1 This favor had been granted on July 17, 1756, and confirmed on August 11, by the Brief: *Pastoris æterni.*

2 The stipends of the Masses of Father D. Pietro Petrella.

comes here about having more Masses; because he has about forty subjects to board and a debt of about two thousand ducats; and what he obtains from the vineyard he has to give to the Baron.[1] But seeing the misery of this house he has not the courage to speak of it. To take now from Ciorani the Mass of Petrella and to give it to him, is a thing that cannot be thought of, the more so since this Mass already belongs there.

Therefore, in order to give you some other Mass I should have to take it from the house at Pagani. Now you know what is the condition of this house.

There is a debt of about two hundred ducats, which has to be paid to butchers and others, who are anxious to be paid. Hence Father Mazzini has declared that he felt no confidence in being able to support the novitiate, although I have assigned to him another Mass which I had assigned to the impoverished house at Iliceto. Hence if there is no prospect of obtaining help, it will become necessary to remove the novitiate from this place.

Now just think, from whom could I take this Mass? I feel compassion for you all, and say that you are right. But I would like to have some one to say to me what I am to do in order to satisfy all. I have already praised you for not having complained, and I see that now you have complained being forced by necessity; but we must embrace our sister, *patience, which is poverty's own sister.*

I thank you for the little paper that you have written, and I expect the other.

I have received no letters from Benevento. I bless all, and I pray to God to grant you patience.

[1] Here there is question of the vineyard which Don Andrea Sarnelli had presented to the Congregation. The Baron Nicola Sarnelli, after the death of his brother, made so many efforts to annul this donation, raised so many difficulties for the Institute that it was agreed, December 7, 1755, to pay him within a certain space of time the sum of a thousand ducats.

After the feast of the Blessed Virgin is over,[1] have the Fathers who can do so make their retreat, because in October of this year there will be work for them; perhaps it will be a mission at Amalfi, which I have heard mentioned. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 267.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

He exhorts a rigorous observance of a point of the Rule.

[NOCERA, August 18, 1756.]

Alfonso Maria de Liguori of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer Rector Major.

The rule that forbids the receiving and the sending of letters without the permission of the Superiors is a matter of great importance. The non-observance of this rule may make room for innumerable disorders that would ruin the Congregation. Hence in order to provide temporarily till the next Chapter for the exact observance of the foregoing rule, we ordain, for the porters of the houses and for all the Brothers, that all the letters that they receive for the subjects, except the letters addressed to the Consultors or written by them, should be carried to the Superiors of the houses or of the missions. In regard to those letters referring to matters of conscience they must conform to the constitution of the Chapter.

Should a Brother neglect the execution of this ordinance, we forbid the subjects to open the letters that they receive;

1 The feast and the octave of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin were celebrated with great solemnity in the house at Caposele.

nor should they forward the letters that they write, before having shown them to the Superior, at least sealed if there is question of matters of conscience.

We charge the consciences of the Superiors with the faithful observance of this rule, and exhort them to punish severely those that are guilty of any infraction of it; otherwise they will make themselves responsible, and will be sternly dealt with by me, since this is a matter of very great importance, and for certain reasons of much greater than some imagine.

In regard to letters concerning matters of conscience, it has been decided in the constitution of the Chapter, that the Superior shall not open them; but we declare that this must be understood of letters from strangers, and not those from relatives.

Given at Nocera de' Pagani at the convent of St. Michael, August 18, in the year 1756.

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
Rector Major.

After an old copy.

LETTER 268.

To Father Francesco Margotta.

He charges him with a commission.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, September 1, [1756?]

When you have spoken to Mgr. di Troia you had better come home; but, if your Reverence cannot do so, Fathers [D. Alessandro de] Meo and Caione should depart as soon as they have had an interview.

Let Father Meo take care not to become overfatigued. I hear that he has been spitting blood, and that his chest is affected. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 269.

To Mother Maria di Gesù, at Ripacandida.

He explains to her the conduct of Father Fiocchi.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, September 24, [1756].

I have received your letter, and Father Fiocchi just happens to be here.

He says that if he ceases to have any relations with you, it is because from a distance and by letter he can hardly do more than undertake the direction of your conscience. For the rest, as soon as you become reconciled to this fact, my dear Mother, he will give you this satisfaction, and I have told him to do so. But in return always recommend me to Jesus Christ; for this is a particular dispensation that I grant in your favor, since our Rule prohibits such a thing.

May Jesus Christ reward you for the charity with which you recommend me to him! Our good Mother in heaven will, I hope, always put you in mind of this.

As for poor me, I do not forget you in my prayers. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 270.

To Father Andrea Villani, Rector of the House at S. Angelo a Cupolo.

Recommendations relative to the interests of the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, October 1, [1756].

I have sent the letter to Marquis Petruro.

You tell me that if the same assistance had been given to Iliceto, it would have been possible to support the novitiate there! — O my dear Andrea! what do you say? Did you therefore hope that the Masses would be said here, and that the money for them would be sent to Iliceto? At Iliceto you would not have received ten *carlini* a week. You had better drive this idea out of your head; for it can never be, no, never, that one house should support the other, because all the houses in whatever condition they may be are really hospitals in which every *carlino* that comes in goes out.

A long explanation would be necessary to make this clear to you. If there had not been secretly set on foot the making of stalls, the carpenter-work for the upper story, etc. we should not now find ourselves in this embarrassment; but now things are done, and we must be silent and must suffer.

When the contract of the farm is settled at Naples I will be able, I hope, to furnish you in November with money from [D. Benedetto] Grazioli to make the purchases.

When you make the purchases do not fail to found two chaplaincies, or at least one of them, in order that we may be able to ordain one of our subjects who would not have any patrimony, a chaplaincy for instance, for Frater [Lo-

renzo] Nigro, who is moreover the only son, though in Minor Orders.[1]

The chaplaincy should be founded entirely in Masses, with an annual revenue corresponding to the tax of the patrimony which at Benevento is thirty ducats; with this should be connected the obligation of celebrating these Masses in our church of the Assumption.

I say this in order that the subject who is deprived of the chaplaincy, if he should leave us [the Institute], may not lay claim to the fruits without coming to celebrate in our church.

The chaplaincy would have to be founded when making the purchases; otherwise it cannot be founded afterwards, as it would be alienated; and alienation would require the intervention of Rome.

The chaplaincy may be founded on the interest-money of the annual revenue. About this you would have to consult the Vicar-General.

We must think of this matter now, because there would be no time after the purchase has been made.

In regard to furnishing another Father to help you on the missions, there is great misery; because applications for missions are innumerable.

For Benevento are already destined Fathers Amarante, Grossi, Buonamano and de Angelis. You may, however, when you wish send for them. [Father] Buonamano can help me at Amalfi whither I shall go at the beginning of the week.

As for the large mission asked for by the Archbishop [of Benevento] write to Father Fiocchi, who will be near Conza, or write to me, and we shall see whether we shall be able to detach one or two of the Fathers.

[1] Frater Lorenzo Nigro, to whose ordination the laws of the kingdom were opposed, as he was the only son, was subsequently ordained at Benevento, in the Papal domain.

The subjects destined for the missions are too few for this campaign.

I conclude, because my head allows me to say no more. Missions, debts, departure for [the mission at] Amalfi, etc. Oh, what embarrassments! Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of Canon Francesco Saverio Martini, Vicar-General of Alatri.

LETTER 271.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Prohibition to go out without a special permission.

NOCERA, October 2, 1756.

No subject is allowed to leave home without the permission of the Rector, and unless the Rector advises him to come to speak to me.

In case the subject does not wish to communicate his affairs (for which he wishes to come) to the Rector of the house, or the Rector does not think it necessary for him to come to me, the subject may write to me; and when I shall say to him to come, he may come.

After an old copy.

LETTER 272.

To Sister Maria Nicoletta Leoni (Di Calvanico), in the Monastery of Fisciano.

He reproaches her for her impatience and exhorts her to resignation.

NOCERA, October 6, [1756].

I have received your letter and with it the stipend for a Mass.

I will pray and have others to pray for you; but if you do not do your share of co-operation in practising patience, God will not come to your assistance, and you will always lead a miserable life. I do not even know what death you will die if you die in the like sentiments of impatience.

You say: *I am surrounded by enemies.* Is this the language of a religious? Enemies, when you yourself tell me that a servant was hired expressly for you? Is it the fault of the Sisters if afterwards this servant falls ill?

Your acts of impatience, it seems to me, are continual, and you blame now the Sisters, because they do not assist you as you wish, now Almighty God, because he does not deliver you from your illness. This is the way that you suffer without merit, and after having thus suffered you will have to go to purgatory to expiate all your acts of impatience.

Well, then, stop all that! otherwise you will die a bad death. Put yourself in God's hands, ask him for good health, but ask with resignation; and if God does not grant it to you, you should say that your illness is good for your eternal salvation.

Is there anything grander than to offer one's sufferings to Jesus Christ, to him who has suffered so much for the love of us, and who has endured greater sufferings without having deserved them? Do this, and you will suffer in peace, and you will weave for yourself a beautiful crown for

Paradise. Among the sufferings that you must offer to God is the little assistance that you receive from the Sisters.

But they forget me! — And you forget that you are a spouse of Jesus Christ; you forget the sins by which you have offended your divine Saviour, the promises that you have made to him, and the love that he has borne you.

In future, I hope that you will do what I have just told you. Renew every day the resolution of offering to God all your pains, and at this very moment when you are reading these lines, make this offering at the foot of the crucifix.

But if you wish to continue to complain of your illness, of your Sisters, etc., it will be useless for you to write me any more, for I loathe to see a religious so impatient and always complaining about the Sisters. If the Sisters do not do their duty, do yours by bearing with them. You will act so, I hope.

I bless you in the name of Jesus Christ and of Mary, so that you may hereafter obey me. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 273.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

He begs him to watch over the health of the students.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, October 27, [1756].

I am told that Frater Michele [de Michele] has begun to look as badly as he did before.

I beg you to examine how he is; and if it be necessary

do not allow him to study, nor to do even what I have permitted him to do. If this young man has a relapse, it will be all over with him.

I have also been informed that Frater [Lorenzo] Nigro and others are seriously affected with bowel troubles.

I give you full power to moderate the studies of these young people, and in case of doubt to incline always to the side of health. I give you all the faculties, on condition, however, that you afterwards render an account of what you have done. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 274.

To the Same.

Various recommendations. — Explanation regarding some points of the Rule of the students.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, 29, [November, 1756].

According to what I hear, my dear Gasparo, you are greatly tortured by that detestable fever. May the will of God be done! I also have been favored these past few days with a little fever.

I beg you not to be troubled about the confessors. There is no harm if all those that come to confession [in our chapel] are not heard. During the missions things are not otherwise. It is therefore sufficient if two or three remain at home.

As you feel indisposed at present, Father [Ignazio] Fiore will remain; when you are better, you can go out for some time, then Father Fiore may take his turn.

Father Picone is now hearing the confessions of men and women, and as he is Prefect of the students, he can engage in the work during the time of studies, of retreat, etc.

Tell Father Leo from me that he should be patient; that

he may hear the confessions of men on all feast days; what is done, has always been done.

I am so much embarrassed at present with missions, especially with those of Calabria that I find it necessary to set out myself sick as I am.

Now attend solely to the restoration of your health.

In relation to the controverted points in the Constitution of the students here is my answer:

1. In regard to the semi-retreat of Sunday mornings, an hour of preparation and an hour of thanksgiving appear to me to be too much; half an hour for each is sufficient. Let there be a conference, a general Communion, a half hour's spiritual reading, the Little Hours in common. The rest of the time every one may spend in private devotion.

2. As for going out, let the Prefect accompany them, or if he is prevented they may be presided over by a discreet student, or the Rector may appoint a Father for this purpose.

The Lector may go out with the students on study days; on recreation days he must go out with the Fathers.

In reference to spiritual direction, the students should address themselves either to the Prefect or the Rector of the house.

I bless you all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 275.

To Mother Maria di Gesù, at Ripacandida.

He exhorts her to correct abuses with prudence.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOLA, December 4, [1756].

I answer you from Nola, where I am at present.

I am very glad that you have undertaken to remedy the abuses that have been introduced against the Rule. May Jesus Christ bless you for your zeal, and give you the strength of which you stand in need! For if in the beginning such abuses are introduced, twenty or thirty years will not pass by before the entire Rule will have been swept away.

As for the *distressed souls* that come to consult you, I advise you not to fail to assist them; since they call upon you expressly for this purpose, we may hope that they will be docile to your advice. Retrench, however, all useless discourse, and endeavor to go straight to the point; yet do this prudently, for you may not be able to do this in the beginning.

Continue to recommend me to Jesus Christ. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 276.

To Canon Giacomo Fontana, at Naples.

He speaks to him about one of his little works: "Rule for Seminaries."

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOLA, December 9, [1756].

I have received your most esteemed note; I will send to his Eminence for the offering of which you speak.

The little work *on Seminaries* is already in press, and

will be issued in accordance with the corrections which you have kindly made.

I shall present a copy of it to all the bishops; I hope that they will read it, as it is short; and I trust that it will redound to the glory of God.

I shall be at your service, and I beg you to recommend me to the Infant Jesus.

In conclusion, I would most humbly kiss your hand. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

It is to you that I have intrusted the revision of the little book *on Seminaries*, since you have had the kindness to read and to correct it. When you read it, you will find all your corrections. I will send you the proofs and the original that you may compare them. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your most humble and devoted servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

The following is the eulogy pronounced by the Canon in his report to Cardinal Sersale:

Most Eminent Sir: In compliance with the order of your Eminence I read the little work entitled "Rule for Seminaries." The most pious author, always bent upon promoting the glory of our Lord, has most accurately explained in this work whatever is required for the good direction of seminaries; hence I judge that its publication will be a public benefit.

I have the honor to remain,
Most Eminent Sir, with profound respect,
your obedient and humble servant,
CAN. GIACOMO FONTANA.

NAPLES, December 19, 1756.

LETTER 277.

To Sister Maria Angela Rosa Graziano, in the Monastery of the SS. Rosario at Naples.

Some advice in regard to the spiritual life.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, December 12, [1756].

I thank you most cordially for the little present, but do not inconvenience yourself on my account.

God knows when I shall go to Naples, especially during winter. For the rest, you have no need of me; you have your director and I am far away.

I send you some spiritual works which I have just published. Read especially the "Practice of Perfection" which comes after the "Novena to St. Teresa," and the "Glories of Mary." You can read some of it every day, even if only half a page. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Write me some particulars about your life, your exercises of piety, and your penances. I will then send you a general rule which you may follow; however let this be with the consent of your director. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of the Redemptorists of Saint-Nicolas-du-Port, diocese of Nancy, France.

LETTER 278.

To Father Emanuele Caldarera, of the Congregation of the Oratory at Naples.

Thanksgiving. — Asking for a favor.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, 17, [January] 1757.

My dear Father Emanuele: I thank you very much for having given me to read the first volume of the *Trappists.* [1] Please to send the others when you can. I have searched in Naples in order to find the Lives of these religious, and I did not succeed. You will surely do well if you send them to your brother that he also may read them.

I send you the little works about which you have been informed [2] with the letters that accompany them; if possible have them sent to Sicily to one of your friends, and beg him to see that they reach their destination.

It matters little that the name of the bishop is not found on some of the letters; that of the episcopal city is always given, and this is sufficient.

You can now offer the holy Sacrifice; grant me, then,

1 This work is probably that which was printed in Milan in the year 1715 and which bears the title: "I prodigi della grazia espressi nella conversione di alcuni grandi peccatori, morti da veri penitenti nel monastero della Trappa della stretta osservanza Cistercienze, opera transportata dalla lingua francese nell' italiana da un monaco di Buonsollazzo, e dedicata a' Peccatori. — The French work had appeared in 1696 under the title: "Relations de la mort de quelques religieux de l' Abbaye de la Trappe" (2 vol. in 12mo); l' Abbé de Rancé is the author. The edition of 1713 was enlarged by another volume, Paris, Delaulne.

2 The "Rule for Seminaries."

my dear Father, a memento in your Mass; I will render you the same service. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Believe me always,

Your very humble and devoted servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the sacristy of the Oratorian Fathers at Naples.

LETTER 279.

To Sister Maria Angela Rosa Graziano, in the Monastery of the SS. Rosario at Naples.

He exhorts her to a perfect love of Jesus Christ.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, 23, [January, 1757].

I yesterday received the box, of which you make me a present. I beg our Lord to reward you for it.

Tell your director that I have been sick for some time through his fault; I mean since the novena which he made me preach for him at Nola.

I am glad that your sister will soon take Jesus Christ for her Spouse. As for you who are already the spouse of this good Master, love him as a spouse, that is, purely through love without having in view temporal or spiritual consolations; and when you go to Communion, pray for me as I always do for you. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved at Rome in the Massimo palace in the chapel of the *Miracolo* di S. Filippo Neri.

LETTER 280.

To Father Emanuele Caldarera, of the Congregation of the Oratory at Naples.

Thanks for services rendered.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, January 28, 1757.

My dear Father Emanuele: You may be assured that in sending me these *Lives of the Trappists* I have received them as a treasure. I had been looking for them so long a time and I could never find them.

It would be a fine thing if after that the head of the house should need ask permission to read his own books! Whenever your Reverence wishes again to read the two books that I have or the others when you have finished reading the former, send me word and I will send them at once to you.

I thank you for delivering the letter addressed to the bishop.[1]

Recommend me to Jesus Christ, because I have done so and am doing so for you with all my heart. I thank you again and am at your service.

Your Reverence knows that I do not wish to be prolix. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! Kissing your hand, I remain,

Your very humble and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

[1] The letter addressed to the Bishop of Sicily of which mention was made in a preceding letter, number 278.

LETTER 281.

To Sister Maria Angela Rosa Graziano, in the Monastery of the SS. Rosario at Naples.

She should ask her director for a rule of conduct such as she needs.

[March, 1757?]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

The following is an answer to your letter.

Since Don Giov. Battista does not give you a rule of conduct such as you need, you must ask him for it. Ask him to tell you, for example, how long a time you should spend in prayer, what mortifications you are to practise, how often you are to communicate, etc. Always ask for Communions and mortifications, and then obey what is prescribed.

As for myself, it is impossible that I should direct you so far away, and moreover, I have no time at my disposal.

Pray to Jesus for me. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 282.

To the Same.

He exhorts her to persevere in prayer.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, April 8, [1757.]

I have received your letter together with the present, for which I thank you; but for pity's sake do not inconvenience yourself on my account.

I have not at present any occasion to go to Naples; when I shall be able to go there I shall call upon you. But you have your director; in what way could I be of service to you?

This morning Don Giov. Battista was here, and he told me that you are doing well; this gave me much pleasure.

As for prayer, that which we perform without relish is the best; for the less it pleases us, the more it pleases Jesus Christ.

Always recommend me to Jesus Christ as I recommend you. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Do not be uneasy in regard to the fancies that importune you during prayer; despise them, and quietly proceed by offering to God this pain. The devil would like to have you abandon prayer; spite him by remaining faithful to prayer. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 283.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

He speaks of a mission that is to be given and of various other subjects.

NOCERA, April 17, [1757].

Be so good as to see to it that this letter may safely reach Giuseppe Caselle. Read the letter addressed to me by the Vicar-General of Salerno; he continues to insist that we should give a mission at Castelluccia. Try in any case to send at least two Fathers; however, two cannot do the work; we need three of them; and it would be well to go to Teora immediately after. In a word, see to it that this little mission be given immediately, and for this purpose let

everything else be laid aside. You should without delay inform Father Fiocchi of this arrangement.

My dear Gasparo, how painful it was to me to see what Father N. has done! I had begged him several times, and the last time I begged him most earnestly, to go to Iliceto to speak to Francesco Antonio Maffei, and instead of going himself he sent a messenger to ask Maffei whether he wished to see him. This made Maffei still more angry, and he renewed his prohibition to gather even dry wood in the forest.[1]

If we have Maffei against us, it will be all over with this house. My God, how can I direct the Congregation when people act in this manner! Let me know why he did not wish to go there. Did he perhaps feel unwell? I purpose to give him a severe penance, but I shall wait for a more favorable opportunity.

As for Brother N. I must say that I tremble for him; for he seems to me to be of a disposition not easy to get along with. However, as to the affair of the blows given to a novice, I have found out that that was not true; for he scarcely touched his head in a playful way. But there is no doubt that he has committed a thousand faults. The letter, however, that he has written to me has consoled me. Let him read my answer to him, and be kind enough to direct him and make him render an account of all that he does, because he is a subject of great hopes.

Then tell Brother N. that his letter has afforded me great pleasure. His penance shall consist in one more visit to the Blessed Sacrament, that he may obtain the grace of practising obedience, and I bless him also. I do not write to him a special letter, because I am not able.

1 Maffei was the agent at Iliceto of the Prince of Castellaneta, and as the officials of the commune depended on him, he succeeded in preventing our Fathers from cutting wood, and from using other privileges.

I bless you all, and especially your Reverence in the pitiable state in which you are now. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 284.

To Don Giuseppe Caselle, at Rappola.

He recommends to him that he should regulate his family affairs.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, April 18, 1757.

I have just received your last letter.

All goes well. As for myself, do not be uneasy. *Quod scripsi, scripsi.* [What I have written, I have written.] Do not spend your time in entertaining doubts. Devote yourself to the arranging of your family affairs, so that you may no more be annoyed by them.[1] In the mean time finish the study of Moral Theology, and recommend me to Jesus Christ. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 285.

To a Father of the Congregation.

Hints as to the composition of a theological treatise.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

June 3, [the year uncertain].

Ask in my name Father N. to compose a treatise *de Incarnatione* to be studied by our young men, because that of Father N. does not please me; but do not let the latter know this.

I should wish him to consult various authors, such as

[1] He did not enter the Congregation, or at least he did not make his profession.

Giovenino, Habert, Contensone, Petavio, Tournely, Gonet, the Manual of Petrocorese, and to write not a book, but *Elements* in which may be found the principal things. On each question let only the principal reasons as also the principal objections be given in a concise but clear style. The *Elements* should exhibit the general notions of certain things and of things controverted, so that one may thereby avoid advancing an error or affirming anything that is controverted. If need be, let him read those authors that treat the matter in detail.

Let Father N. read these remarks, and gradually set to work to compose the treatise, especially as I hear that he has already begun to do so.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 286.

To Father Celestino de Robertis.

He begs him to change his place of abode.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

June 4, 1757.

My dear Celestino: I see that in that house [of S. Angelo a Cupolo] your Reverence and Father Villani do not agree because between you two there exists a spirit of contradiction; for this reason I have to remove either your Reverence or Father Andrea [Villani].

But it is not convenient for me at present to take away F. Andrea, because the Archbishop [of Benevento] has asked me not to take the latter from him; hence if now I remove him I should displease the archbishop. I therefore beg you to leave that house immediately and to go to Ciorani as soon as possible.

When setting out perform some act of humility in regard to Father Andrea, because I do not wish that any grudge should remain between you. A divergence of opinion

or of appreciation should not take its abode in the heart of him who wishes only God.

I bless you. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in our house at Innsbruck, Tyrol.

LETTER 287.

To Mgr. Vito Moio, Bishop of Muro.

Promise made to a prelate who was ill-disposed towards the Institute.

[June 8, 1757.]

We the undersigned, Rector Major and Fathers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, promise and also bind ourselves with an oath *tacto pectore more sacerdotali* [with the hand on the breast after the manner of priests taking an oath], not to receive nor cause to be received into our, the said Congregation any subject (of whatever state, grade, and condition, for whatever motive and even most important reason) of the city and diocese of Muro, without the express consent of Monsignor the Bishop of that city and diocese; which consent for greater caution must be *in writing*.

The 8th day of June, 1757.

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI, *Rector Major*, promises and swears as above.

Giovanni Mazzini, Consultor, promises and swears as above. — Francesco Maria Margotta, Consultor, promises and swears as above. — Girolamo Ferrara, Consultor, promises and swears as above. — Lorenzo d' Antonio, Procurator-General, promises and swears as above. — Celestino de Robertis promises and swears as above. — Francesco del Corpo promises and swears as above. — Donato Me-

laccio promises and swears as above. — Pietro Blasucci promises and swears as above. — Gaetano Spero promises and swears as above. — Pasquale Bianco promises and swears as above. — Mauro Murante promises and swears as above. — Pasquale Amendolara promises and swears as above. — Salvatore Gallo promises and swears as above.

After the original preserved in our house at Pagani.

LETTER 288.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Caposele.

He requests him to watch over the observance of the Rule and the preservation of the health of the subjects. — Rules in regard to the teaching of theology.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, 15, [July, 1757.]

You have answered wonderfully well in regard to the ordinary confessor for Calitri.[1] Continue now to say that you do not dare to write to me on the subject, because that would give me much pain, and I would never consent to so grave a thing against the Rule, no, never; I say no more.

Father Margotta says that when there is question of the interests of the whole Congregation, we should know how to resist and be deaf to every solicitation for three and even ten years.[2]

As for Frater Ricca, let him recover entirely, for he has always been ailing and weak; in October we shall speak of his coming.[3]

[1] The Archbishop of Conza wished to impose on the Fathers of Caposele the duty of hearing the confessions of the nuns of Calitri; a thing that was forbidden by the Rule of the Institute.

[2] Father Margotta was a native of Calitri. It was he whom the archbishop wished to have as confessor of the nuns.

[3] The young man Amato Ricca had begun his novitiate March 25 of this year, but on account of weak health he was sent to Caposele. He made his profession at Ciorani, April 20, 1758.

I await Brother Giuseppe Caputo to arrange matters for the ordination of his son.[1]

Send Father [Pietro] Petrella to Ciorani to drink the waters. Here no more persons are received.

As for the affair of Brother N. reported to me by Father Ferrara, do you really believe that I ever lent an ear to what that good Brother said? The Brother, you know, often talks nonsense, and I reprimanded him severely; still he will always remain what he is.

I hear that several students have been a little unwell. In the morning, during the hot weather, let them go out during the time one may walk without being inconvenienced by the sun, that is, before the sun becomes very warm.

I wish that the students should enjoy good health; it matters little that they lose on this account two hours of study. Let them go out also in the evening, and have at least an hour's recreation.

If you have still to speak in reference to the confessor for Calitri, express yourself in regard to the matter yet more strongly. Arrange things in such a way that, if it can be done, I may not be obliged to write about this subject; for if I must write I should have to express myself with still greater force, and we might thereby displease the archbishop.

As for Frater [D. Vincenzo] Striano I should like to know what is to be done; I shall have to reflect on the matter.

As for the scholastic questions about the sacraments, I do not wish that there be taught opinions contrary to those that we hold in Moral Theology. I speak of the principal

[1] Giuseppe Caputo, having become a widower, retired into our Congregation in company with his son, and became a lay-brother. When the time for his son's ordination drew near, he was expected at Ciorani to settle about the patrimony of his son.

questions; of attrition, of the minister of marriage, and also of the intention that the minister must have to do what the Church does, etc.

In important and the like principal questions I wish that the common opinions and those that I myself teach in my Moral Theology should be followed and maintained as much as possible. I do not write specially to Father Leo because the Brother is about to depart; but you may tell him that on this point I do not wish him to make any reply. If the Lector holds a contrary opinion, let him keep it to himself; for the rest he must practise obedience, and endeavor to defend our opinions by the best possible reasons, endeavoring to become attached only to those opinions that are conformable to obedience.

Tell Father Leo that I shall not listen to Father N. . . . . and that he should guide himself as seems best to him. It will be sufficient that a two year's course in theology be given, and that the principal treatises, *de Deo*, *de Trinitate*, *de Incarnatione*, and *de Gratia* be taught. Ask him from me not to devote too much time to history, as Father [Alessandro de] Meo has done.

What I wish him to do is to explain thoroughly the dogmas, the distinctions, terms, and principal questions treated by the scholastics: these, called *Elements*, are necessary for preaching, etc. As for the rest, every one will study what he can.

I have spoken of certain questions, such as the institution of marriage, etc. I have not done so in order to criticise N. . . . . I intended to write to him, for I do not wish outsiders to look upon us as fanatics, nor as would-be-learned men. Common opinions as a general rule are the most probable, and when we follow opinions that are common, we cannot be criticised.

Recommend to Frater [D. Giuseppe di] Lucia not to be uneasy about what he hears those say that are not Supe-

riors; and when he hears the Superior speak, he should grow calm by conforming to obedience; and if obedience requires that he should not study, such will certainly be the will of God.

I bless all.

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] I do not wish that Purcozio [1] should be any more criticised as I hear that he is, for the purpose of bringing him into discredit. This book has met with general approval; why should we criticise it? If any one wishes to find fault with it, let him do so privately; for my part I wish to be obeyed. If obedience ceases with us, it will be all over with the Congregation.

Privately: N. N. . . . writes to me in great trouble that the spirit is waning, *poverty is practised only partially and charity is no longer disinterested;* do not say a word to him, for he has written to me with great secrecy. Be careful. This subject makes me tremble. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Neapolitan edition of 1848.

LETTER 289.

To Sister Maria di Gesù, Carmelite, at Ripacandida.[2]

He exhorts her to patience and gives her other advice.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, July 22, [1757].

I have received your letter of July 4, with the letter of Marquis Brancone.

[1] Edmond Purchot (Purcozio), Rector of the Paris university (1651 — 1734). The fourth edition of his *Institutiones philosophicæ* appeared at Lyons and at Paris in 1753. — The edition of Padua is of 1751.

[2] After one year of government this holy religious had again become a simple subject.

How great was the joy I felt when I learned that you had descended to the rank of a simple subject for the greatest benefit of your soul! But the harrowing fears that produce in your soul a sort of agony cause me still greater joy. If you had not these trials I should fear that you are not a true disciple of Jesus Christ; for Jesus Christ treats his cherished souls as he himself has been treated. Oh, how beautiful it is to walk in the way of the cross and to accompany our blessed Redeemer! Oh, how sure is this road on which one cannot go astray!

I feel very grateful to you for the remembrance of me in your prayers. Continue, I entreat you, to remember me always, especially now, when having fewer external cares, you can commune with Jesus Christ all by yourself.

I do not write specially to Sister Maria Celeste, but I communicate to her through you who knows all. Recommend to her, my dear Mother, not to say to Mgr. [Teodoro Basta] that she does not wish his direction; and induce her not to take another director: this would not be proper. Let her keep herself in peaceful indifference, and in her difficulties let her ask your advice.

I send you the portrait of Brother Gerardo;[1] it is one of those that Don Benedetto gave me and that he had printed. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

1 The Venerable Brother Gerardo Maria Maiella died in the odor of sanctity, October 15, 1755. Father Caione had his portrait taken and many copies of it were printed at the expense of Don Benedetto Grazioli of Atella who had held the holy Brother in the highest esteem. This esteem was shared by Sister Maria di Gesù who had the happiness of speaking more than once with the Venerable Brother. She had been a witness of one of his ecstasies. See Life of Brother Gerardo.

LETTER 290.

To the Same.

The feelings of the king towards the Congregation are not those of Marquis Brancone.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, October 2, [1757?]

A few lines only. — I have had the fever for many days past; but to-day, thanks be to God, I am free from it.

Canon Caselle has already arrived; but I have yet to speak to him at my leisure. Pray to God to grant him the necessary strength; for in the embarrassed state in which we find ourselves many privations will have to be endured.

In regard to Marquis Brancone, I thank you for the zeal with which you have recommended us to him. May Jesus Christ reward you for this! But, my dear Sister, if our affairs do not turn out well, it will not be Brancone's fault. He does all that he can to assist us. It is the king that does not wish to grant our request; this he himself has declared to the Archbishop of Naples who spoke to him in our favor. We must then ask God to change the heart of the king. However, may God bless his Majesty, and may we become saints!

Recommend me to Jesus Christ and salute for me all your Sisters. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 291.

To the Fathers of His Congregation.

Explanations as to the vow of poverty. — Various Recommendations.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, October 3, 1757.

My dear Brethren in Jesus Christ: For the benefit of general observance I have thought it to be my duty to lay down the following rules: —

After having carefully examined with the Consultors whether it is contrary to poverty to receive uncertain restitutions, and whether the confessors can apply them at their pleasure to pious works, it has been decided upon the authority of Doctors and upon the authority of reason that to act so would undoubtedly be against poverty.

Father Lohner in his *Bibliotheca manualis* puts this question: *Is it permitted* (to a religious) *to receive money or anything else to distribute among the poor?* — and he answers: *By receiving any object with the power of giving it to these persons or those, he that receives it would act against his vow if he distributed it at his own pleasure without being authorized to do so by his Superior; because it is out of order that he that is bound by the vow of poverty should act as if he had the ownership or the use of what has been put into his hands.*[1] — For the same reason Father Rodriguez says that "not only is it contrary to the vow

1 "An liceat ab alio pecuniam accipere, vel simile quid, quod in pauperes distribuatur?" (Et respondet:) "Si ita accipiat ut liberum ei sit his vel illis dare, tum omnino contra votum facturum, si accipiat sine facultate (Superioris), cum neque proprietas, neque usus illius rei, independens a Superiore, cuiquam paupertatis voto obstricto conveniat." — *Paupertas*, tom. 3, tit. 112, § ii. *in fine*.

of poverty to take a thing as one's own, but to have the use and free disposal of it without the permission of the Superior." [1]

Azor says that this decision is conformable to the common opinion of authors. *It is equally certain,* he says, *a religious cannot have any peculium of the second kind* (that is, with the faculty of disposing of it at his own pleasure); *for the use or the administration of a good is indeed repugnant to the vow of poverty as long as the Superior cannot direct in this the will of his inferior. In fact, a religious cannot possess anything as his own; now the power of using or disposing of property without dependence on the will of the Superior would be equal to the possession of a thing as one's own.*[2] It is for the same reason, adds Azor, that the Council of Trent has decided *that the use of movable property belongs only to those who are officials, and that they are to act only according to the will of the Superior.*[3]

The reason of this decision is clear; because the use of an object that is made independently of the will of the Superior by him that is bound by the vow of poverty in an act of ownership, which is injurious to the vow.

This being established, in order to relieve myself from every scruple as to the oath that I have taken to permit no personal use independent of the Superior, and also to

[1] *Religious Perfection*, part 3, treat. 3, ch. 15.

[2] "Certi item juris est, non posse religiosum secundi generis peculium habere: nam etiam voto paupertatis repugnat usus vel administratio, in qua Abbas nutu suo monachum amovere non possit; religiosus enim nihil proprium habere potest, sed usus vel administratio, quam quis pro libitu habet, nullius alterius voluntati subjectam, est aliquid proprium." — *Azor*, part. i. lib. 12, cap. 9, vers. *Hoc posito.*

[3] "Administratio autem bonorum monasteriorum seu conventuum ad solos officiales eorumdem, ad nutum Superiorum amovibiles, pertineat." — *Sess.* 25, *de Regular. et Monial.* cap. 2.

obviate many other inconveniences, I have found it expedient to ordain, and by these presents I ordain for each and all, that all uncertain restitutions received by our confessors, when they are at home, should be carried to the Rector, to be employed in pious works; and if they are on missions these restitutions shall be put into the hands of the Superior of the missions, who shall use it with prudence for the expenses of the mission, or to give them in alms. Finally, in order to avoid all violation and all misinterpretation of the ordinance I am giving, I expressly forbid confessors to suggest to their penitents that they should express the intention that the restitution be assigned to such or such a work; for this would be eluding this ordinance.

As for the obedience that is due to me, I am often obliged to repeat the same things in order to be obeyed. Where is then, my Brethren, this delicate fidelity that God asks of you? What peace can a subject have who acts contrary to the intention of his Superior? As for myself, I know not how this can be excused before God. I fear that some great chastisement from God will befall him. It is only twenty-four years since the Congregation has been established; and if such behavior continues, what will become of it a hundred years hence?

I recommend to you what the Rule says about letter-writing. I do not wish the subjects to receive letters unless they have before submitted them to the inspection of the Superior. He shall not read them if they regard matters of conscience; otherwise I charge the Superiors to open all the other letters without exception, and at least to glance over them before giving them to the religious to whom they are addressed.

I expressly forbid our religious to go to the houses of seculars without permission from the Superior, unless in a case of urgent necessity when there is no time to ask permission. I specially recommend that we should not go

to the monasteries of nuns without the permission of the Rector himself.

I earnestly recommend that no one should make known to strangers the affairs of the Congregation or of the house. What misery it is to see strangers better instructed about our affairs than our own people!

I again advise and recommend that when there is question of allowing the subjects to spend the night outside of our houses, especially if it is for several days, you take care to give me notice if there be time to do so.

I recommend that obedience should be paid to the Superiors of the houses and of the missions as it is paid to myself. In regard to this I have heard many complaints.

The Chapter has declared that in reference to the question of knowing whether as to the expenses of more than twelve scudi the Consultors have a decisive voice, we should conform to the practice of the Pious Workers. Information on this subject has been asked, and the answer was in the affirmative. Let all the Rectors, therefore, be guided by this decision.

I earnestly request that no postulant be sent to me to be received, unless I have previously received notice.

I strictly enjoin that there be put in execution the ordinance of the Chapter prescribing that in every house a book should be kept of receipts and expenses also of the alms; moreover that in the sacristy, as the Sovereign Pontiff ordains, there be a table giving the Masses that have been founded.

I recommend above all that the Masses be not said with precipitation; for this would give more scandal in us than in other priests.

As to the missions, I advise (1) a day of retreat for each month. Let us (2) not seek to have particular food during the missions; provided we have soup and boiled meat, we should not ask for anything else. The

observance of this rule will give great edification; if now we begin to relax in it, we shall in a short time relax in everything. (3) We should not, especially on missions, make confidants of strangers; let there be no useless conversation. We must always be polite although we should be reserved. (4) I recommend modesty of the eyes; it is even more necessary than the preaching of sermons. (5) The Chapter of faults should be held on all the missions. (6) We should guard against joking in the presence of strangers. Let the Superior always appoint a censor who is to take notice of faults and to inform me of them. (7) There should always be a Prefect of the church, and a Prefect of peace; the latter may at the same time take charge of those that are engaged to be married, and he should persuade them to marry as soon as possible. (8) I recommend to him that is charged to preach the principal sermons to recite with the people before the sermon, morning and evening prayers according to the formula that I have indicated in my little book. We should recommend the tolling of the bell to announce that some one is dying; let the manner of tolling be different according to the rank of the person. We should invite the faithful to recite then an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary* for the dying. This practice is useful both for the sick and for those that are in good health.

I embrace you all in Jesus Christ. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 292.

To Sister Maria Angela Rosa Graziano, in the Convent of the SS. Rosario at Naples.

He recommends to her obedience and perfect detachment.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

[NOCERA], October 16, [1757].

I answer your letter.

As regards your direction, I have assigned to you a good guide; obey him then, and you will become a saint.

As for mortifications, ask for them frequently; then do what you are told. I rejoice that you are detached from your relatives, but I regret that you are so troubled on account of my absence. All your affections, you should know, should be reserved for the infinite Good who alone merits all love. Moreover, when I go to Naples, all my time is taken up with business, and I afterwards try to go away as soon as possible without seeing relatives or friends. You will then do well to pray for me. On my part, I pray to Jesus to your intention that Jesus Christ may entirely possess your heart without any reserve. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 293.

To the Same.

Recommendations in regard to obedience.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, 28, [October, 1757?]

Since Don Giovanni Battista is absent, provided he has not returned, begin to do what I have told you; but on his return, ask him for the necessary permissions. Pray to Jesus Christ and Mary for me. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

LETTER 294.

To Mother Maria Cherubina Dei Sette Dolori, Carmelite at Ripacandida.

He exhorts her zealously to maintain regular observance.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, October 29, [1757].

I have read your letter, and I see with regret that you are so timid, and that you have too much consideration when there is question of maintaing regular observance: for the loss of observance is the ruin of the monastery; and if you begin thus, what will happen later?

S. Andrea Avellino, when there was question of observance, always raised his voice against those Superiors on whom regular observance depended. Speak then forcibly, and speak always, without troubling yourself about the fact that you are regarded as indiscreet and imprudent.

Yes, for a work of charity, the Prioress can sometimes

omit the common acts, but if this happen often, it would not be well.

For you as well as for the others to have special conveniences without a particular reason, for instance, on account of sickness or the like, is a disorder that may ruin the Community. I say the same of other things.

Prayer is recited before meals, after meals, and at all times, even in the last agony; do not therefore fear to pray after having eaten, and even to read something, though this should be done without effort.

When you write, write briefly, and only what is necessary. Pray every day for me. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 295.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

He indicates to him the manner of treating a student who is tempted against his vocation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

November 3, [1757].

My dear Don Gasparo: Frater Siniscalchi is very much disturbed, and I see that he has many faults. I shall answer him accordingly. But, what can be done? Let us apply the best remedy that we can.

I have written to him that he should depend on you; try to arrange this matter. He has, as far as I can see, a taste for the study of Moral Theology; but Father Leo wishes him to review arithmetic and those things that he has already studied, and requires him to spend the whole morning in this kind of study.

It is indeed useless to make him repeat what he has already gone through. Hence it is my wish that he should apply himself to Moral Theology according as you may

judge best, as I am too far away and cannot attend to this matter. Act as if all this came from yourself and settle everything. Let us in this way remedy two evils.

Frater Siniscalchi says, moreover, that you as well as Father Leo cannot look at him, and that you tell Father Leo all that you know about him. I tell you this for your own guidance, but I beg you to keep this a secret.

He is a young man of much talent, yet at present he is weak and very much tempted.[1] Let us help him as far as we can without prejudice to regular observance.

The retreat of half a day on Sundays should last till the signal is given for dinner, and no longer; after this time there is no longer any retreat.[2]

Among other things Frater Siniscalchi complains that when he speaks to you, you scarcely answer him. I inform you of this that you may treat him with greater consideration; for you must know that he is violently tempted.

Tell Father Leo that I have ordered twelve copies of Tournely's Compendium; but these cost money and I am bankrupt. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved at Rome in our convent at Monterone.

[1] Francesco Siniscalchi, knew not how to overcome the temptations that assailed him and he was allowed to leave the Congregation, December 30, of this year 1757. Having then become a priest, he was a few years afterwards assassinated in Sicily by a friend to whom he had lent some money.

[2] The students of the Congregation must make a short retreat every Sunday till the signal which is given before dinner.

LETTER 296.

To Father Antonio Tannoia.

He reproaches him for having revealed to him too late the unworthiness of a novice.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, November 25, [year uncertain].

I have received your letter, and I say: May God make you a saint!

Only now, you and Father N., etc., send me information in regard to Frater P. after he has made the vows! Had I known what I know now, I would have dismissed him a thousand times. But now what is to be done?

I had put off the profession, and still nothing was said to me. Well! may God make you all saints! I have restricted him so that he might take his departure of his own accord. I have sent him word that he should not think of Mass, etc. — In a word, may God make you all saints! to have waited till now to send me the necessary information! Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 297.

To Father Pietro Blasucci,[1] Prefect of the Students at Ciorani.

How he should act in regard to an indocile student.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, December 20, 1757.

Oh, what a fine remedy you have found for Frater Tamangi! *I shall send him back to you at Christmas!*

[1] Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, one of the chief ornaments of our Congregation, was born at Ruvo, in the diocese of Muro, February 22, 1729. Having finished the humanities and philosophy, he found

I absolutely forbid your Reverence and all the Superiors (and tell this to all, to the Rector, Father Saverio, etc.) never to send him to me; and I particularly forbid him to call upon me unless he has first humbled himself and comes to ask my pardon; tell him that unless he does this he shall never see my face again. Command him then in my name to come no more in search of me, if he has not changed.

If he wishes to write to me, let him do so; but I have already told him that if he speaks to me about a dispensation I will, at the very beginning while reading his letter, tear it to pieces and send him no answer.

I will therefore send him to you at Christmas! Now what more have I to say to him that I have not told him? If he begins to commit faults, and does not wish to study for the purpose of leaving the Community, make an arrangement with the Superior; have recourse to punishments, to fasts; keep him away from the society of others; take away his Communions.

In regard to Communions do what you think best; but

himself impelled to follow the generous example of his younger brother Domenico, who had entered our Institute, and secretly fled from his father's house. He received the habit, August 14, 1752, and on the same day of the following year, he made his profession. We may easily form an estimate of his talents, of his prudence and of his other striking qualities when we learn that St. Alphonsus promoted him, though he was still a young man, to the important position of Superior and director of the Sicilian missions. Blasucci was only thirty-two years of age when he undertook to found the house at Girgenti. It would take a large volume to record all his labors on that abandoned island, and the many petty annoyances which he had to suffer from evil-minded men and from the civil authorities. In the year 1792, Father Pietro Paolo was elected Superior-General of the Congregation, and after governing the Institute in a saintly manner for twenty-four years, he died full of virtue and merit in our house of S. Michele de' Pagani, May 13, 1817, at the age of eighty-eight.

as for so many Communions for one that is unfaithful, for one that wishes to abandon God, after God has called and accepted him, I know not what good they can do him. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

As for [the student Don Giuseppe] Paravento, of course send him with the others to Iliceto for the feast.

With regard to the young man of Cava, he has been accepted, but it will be necessary to have an understanding with Mgr. Borgia. He himself will speak to you. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in our convent at St. Trond, Belgium.

LETTER 298.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, Master of Novices at Iliceto.

He earnestly recommends to him a postulant.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, April 5, 1758.

Read the enclosed letter which I have addressed to Father Rector [Francesco Giovenale], and send it at once to him by a messenger.

I recommend to you this young man; give him the habit, and show him great charity; listen to him every time that he wishes to speak to you, and assist him, for he is a subject of great promise. He is now well disposed, but he is greatly tormented by temptation, having led in the past rather a free life.

If he should unfortunately fall into sin, frighten him, but at the same time animate him with confidence for all that. Do not you yourself lose confidence if he now and then

happens to fall. Say the same to Father Gisone [1] or to any other Father whom this young man chooses as his confessor. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 299.

To the Priest Angelo Maione,[2] in the Novitiate at Iliceto.

His fears in regard to the health of this novice.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, April 9, 1758.

My dear Don Angelo: I have read your letter; but I also received a letter from Father Master, in which he informs me that he has it from your own mouth that you have been suffering from this pain in the head for several years, and that you are troubled even with vertigo.

My dear Don Angelo, if it is true that you are subject to this headache, how could you remain in the Congregation in which one must give much time to spiritual exercises, and remain shut up during the novitiate, and then besides these exercises apply one's self to one's studies? If you fatigue your head by forced work, you will entirely ruin your health, you will become useless both to yourself and to the Congregation, and you will lead a miserable life; for if the pain has once become settled in the head, it cannot be got rid of.

However, I do not say that you should leave at once;

[1] Father Gisone was then *socius* of Father Tannoia, or assistant of the Master of novices.

[2] Don Angelo Maione was born at S. Domenico, in the diocese of Cassano, March 17, 1733, and was admitted into the novitiate, August 15, 1758; he made his profession, April 15, of the following year. For a long time he was a most useful member of the Congregation, but unfortunately he afterwards disgraced himself by attempting to introduce the *Regolamento*, a matter which is treated in the "Life of St. Alphonsus."

let us wait a little while to see how things will turn out. Consult Signor N., and let me know what he says when he returns; tell him to write to me clearly what he thinks of your health. Recommend me to Jesus Christ.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 300.

To Father Antonio Tannoia.

Various counsels relative to the Master of novices and to the novitiate.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, April 10, 1758.

I have received a copy of the long address against N.; and I have also received the reproof that you administer to me.

I well understand that the Master of novices would be more tranquil if he himself were the Rector of the house; that would be better for his own repose, but still greater inconveniences would result therefrom.

I shall write to the Rector and mark out for him a line of conduct, and let him know that he should not interfere in the internal concerns of the novitiate; but it will not be well to let others see my letter; it suffices that I write him privately.

As for the young man, I will briefly, as I am not well, point out to you what you should do. Keep him still on trial at least for a month; watch his behavior, and after this delay, if he conducts himself well, give him the habit.

As for the disease from which he has been suffering, the doctors write to me that he has entirely recovered. If this be not true, it will be a disease that one cannot hide, and then we have still one year for his probation. In the mean time it would be well to try him by mortifications; and

then, if he receives the habit, we should always subject him to trial.

I also hear that the priest of Masi has a delicate stomach so that he cannot retain his food. Write to me what is his condition.

I bless you all. In summer you may permit the novices to go out evenings.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 301.

To the Same.

The saint makes some arrangements in the novitiate and the house at Iliceto.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, April 29, 1758.

As for Scalese,[1] I wish him a happy journey.

In regard to Maione, inform me how he is doing. He has written me a very touching letter.

When your Reverence comes here, bring with you the *directory*, since the series of exercises for the morning appear to me to be too long; try to divide it. And now that the weather has become warm, it will be necessary for the novices to go out often.

When Father Polestra comes, tell him privately that I appoint him inspector of the house. He should inform me every month of any disorder that strikes him as important: I say *important*, because it will not be necessary to send word to me about trifles. It will be sufficient if he writes to me this one line: *there is nothing of importance.*

Tell Father Giovenale that I do not write to him, as there is no news.

Father [Stefano] Liguori has arrived in time; had he not

[1] A novice just dismissed.

arrived, there would have been great confusion, because there was no one to give the spiritual exercises to the priests.

The three novices [1] that have been sent have been admitted to profession.

Believe me, dear Father,

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*Postscript by the secretary*]: Our Father says that at table should be read *li Disinganni* [2] till it is finished, but only the *Lives*, not the *Reflections*.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 302.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

One cannot without the gravest inconveniences absolve a subject who has left the Congregation without having received his dispensation.

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

May 30, 1758.

My God! what news must I hear from that house! I learn that in consequence of a consultation held by several, N. has been absolved on condition that he asks for a dispensation! Now he has hundreds of times asked me for

[1] These three novices, sent from Iliceto to Ciorani before their profession, were Amato Ricca, Teodosio Telesca, and Andrea Morza. They made their vows April 20 into the hands of Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci.

[2] The title of this work is as follows: "Disinganni per vivere e morire bene, sopra le cinque parole di S. Paolo apostolo, opera composta dal P. Francesco della Croce, carmelitano scalzo." (Disenchantments, or Instructions to Live and Die Well, founded on Five Words of St. Paul the Apostle. Work composed by Father Francis of the Cross, a discalced Carmelite.)

a dispensation; it was, therefore, not necessary for you to to impose this upon him as an obligation. In short, what he could not obtain from Rome he has obtained from this house!

Oh, what pain has it been to me to hear such news! But what necessity was there for you to touch upon so delicate a point on which depends the maintenance of the Congregation? If you thought that he could be absolved on this condition, were there no other confessors in the world to absolve him? As to the one that has thus absolved him outside of the danger of death, I do not know how he could have formed his conscience. When there is question of doing difficult things, as has really happened, one does not give absolution before the accomplishment of that which has to be performed.

And then whence should this dispensation come? I for my part will never give it, if he that leaves without dispensation does not return to the Congregation. When he returns and has received the required penances, then I will reflect on what should be done. I judge that this is the way every Rector Major should act, if he does not wish to lose his soul and be the cause of ruin to the Congregation.

I have conferred with the Cardinal Penitentiary at Rome in regard to this matter; and if I should see that the *Penitentiary* would grant such dispensation, I would resolve to write and write again to the Sovereign Pontiff. But our house at N. does what the *Penitentiary* at Rome does not do!

Communicate the contents of my letter to all the Fathers of your Community, and especially to those that have given this beautiful advice. I also beg you to make known in accordance with prudence the substance of this letter to all our young men [students] and to the Brothers so that this example may not be the cause of ruin to others.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 303.

To Father Emanuele Caldarera, of the Congregation of the Oratory.

He testifies his friendship for him and recommends himself to his prayers.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, June 9, 1758.

My dear Father Emanuele: I am consoled to hear of the little present that you have received from Jesus Christ, of the mortification that he has sent you; but I am sorry on account of the loss of souls.

Be without disquietude; I will not omit to recommend you to the Lord; but I beg you do not forget our agreement.

About the middle of July we may see each other at Naples. — I have destroyed the letter. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

I have read with great joy what you tell me about the four novices.

Do me the favor of sending the enclosed letter to one of your Fathers at Palermo.

Believe me, dear Father,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO,

of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 304.

To the Fathers and Students of the Congregation.

(This letter was written in the name of the saint by Father Fabrizio Cimino.)

The Propaganda had requested missionaries for Asia; an appeal is made to the zeal of the subjects of the Institute.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, July 18, 1758.

My dear Fathers and Fratres in Jesus Christ: I have been requested by our Father to communicate to you the news that he has been asked to send young men to the foreign missions of Asia. There various people of the Nestorian sect have most earnestly asked to be instructed in Catholic dogmas in order to be united with the Roman Church in which the grace of our Lord makes us know that eternal salvation is to be found.

Behold there is opened to us a vast field in which the harvest is quite ready and is waiting to be gathered in by workmen animated with zeal. Look at those unfortunate nations who bathed in tears raise a suppliant voice to heaven, and conjure the Lord to send you to them. They extend their arms towards you and beg you to come to withdraw them from the fatal ignorance in which they have lived for more than thirteen hundred years. Unfortunate people! they do not wish to resort to those that have hitherto guided them in the ways of error, and they address themselves to you whom they regard as the true dispensers of divine wisdom. In their extreme poverty, they ask for nothing else but to be returned to the bosom of the Church. It is you whom they supplicate; you, I say, that show yourselves so generous towards your fellow-countrymen; it is you whom they conjure not to value their souls less than those of our own country. They have had

the same Creator, they were formed of the same substance, and have as much right as we have to the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. One may even say that there is a species of justice that should urge us to carry the light of truth into the country whence we have received it.

If the journey frightens you, they promise to recompense you by a most affectionate reception; if the inconveniences make you shudder, they assure you of a rich harvest. If the fatigue that you would have to endure causes you to fear, you should be encouraged by the eternal reward that awaits you. And what reason could we have of not coming to their assistance?

My Fathers and Brothers, I am certain that several will express to me their desire not to lose the crown that the Lord deigns to present them with his divine hands, — a crown with which I wish to see that the forehead of each one may be adorned in the heavenly country.

In conclusion I recommend myself to your prayers, and while humbly kissing your hands I sign myself

Your servant and Brother in Jesus Christ,

FABRIZIO CIMINO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

LETTER 305.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, Prefect of the Students at Ciorani.

He answers the students and gives them important advice.

(Read this letter to all the young men.)

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, July 27, 1758.

My dear Brethren: The petitions that you have sent me have afforded me great joy; be assured that I say this sincerely. I should be most desirous to see several of our young men go among the heathen to give their lives for

Jesus Christ; but I must first be certain of the spirit and the perseverance of each one. I therefore beg you to apply yourselves for the present to your studies; for you cannot set out without having finished your studies and having undergone an examination at Rome. You should, above all, become closely united to Jesus Christ. He that goes among the heathen without having provided himself with the love for Jesus Christ and with the desire to suffer, runs great risk of losing the faith and his own soul.

Those that persevere in these dispositions will do well to renew their request from time to time, say, every nine or ten months. In the mean time become closely attached to Jesus Christ, and pray to him every day that he may make you worthy of so great a grace.

Pay attention, my dear Brethren: *Leo rugiens circuit, quærens quem devoret.* [The devil as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.—*1 Peter*, v. 8.] You see that Frater [Maturazzo] [1] is already out of the Congregation. In a short time God has driven away two that a short time ago were among you. Be on your guard against faults; for the devil acts in the following manner: At first he lets us commit faults, and then he causes us to lose our vocation. Be convinced that God wishes to have in the Congregation *only those that have a true desire to sanctify themselves;* as for the imperfect, sooner or later he will find means of expelling them.

I therefore beg each one of you to ask every day especially for the grace of perseverance in your vocation; by neglecting this many have lost their vocation. Let us always tremble and pray; he that does not tremble and does not continually pray cannot persevere.

[1] Gaetano Maturazzo had made profession August 31, 1746. The loss of vocation was for him the greatest misfortune; for after leaving the Congregation he led a disorderly life and found his death in a brawl, dying without the consolations of the Church.

Let us not count upon the spiritual fervor that we may experience; for if afterwards there comes over us rough and stormy weather, all the resolutions that we have made will disappear; and if God does not aid us, we are lost. Always sustain yourself by prayers, and ask without ceasing our Lord to help you to die in the Congregation.

I love each one of you as much as I love myself or rather I should say, more than I love myself; yet when I see any one no longer loving the Congregation, I am forced in spite of the pain that such a duty gives me to dismiss him even if he were my own brother. I bless you, and I remain, etc.

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] Please tell Fathers Pentimalli and Buonassisi to call on me one of these days as I wish to be informed of certain matters.

After the original preserved in our house at Frosinone.

LETTER 306.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

Another answer to the letters of the students.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, August 11, 1758.

I am gladdened and am consoled by the request made to me of going among the unbelievers. The going among these unfortunate beings should always depend on obedience, since I cannot send all those that have applied to me. It will however be necessary that the Lord should make known to me who is truly called to do this work, and who is not. . . . .

After an old copy.

LETTER 307.

To the Novices at Iliceto.

He urges them to render themselves worthy of one day going among the heathen.

[August 1758.]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

My dear Children: Yes, if you always manifest to me by proofs that you really have what is necessary in order to go to evangelize the heathen, there will be no difficulty in sending you.

But these proofs are not seen in the contempt that we meet with purposely, but in the contempt which is patiently borne when occasions suddenly arise. The contempt voluntarily sought after, or when one knows that it is purposely given, will cause but little pain.

And so pay attention that from this day forward no one should say to you: *Are you one of those that wish to go to Japan?* Every day, especially at Communion, pray to Jesus Christ for me, and I say this to all the novices as a matter of obedience. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your brother ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original to be found in the diocese of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

LETTER 308.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

He inculcates upon them the observance of various points of the Rule.

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

NOCERA, August 13, 1758.

My dear Fathers and Brothers: I again recommend to all the observance of the Rule, and especially of obedience in regard to which I learn that many are delinquents.

Endeavor to have always before your eyes the happy death of so many of our departed brethren, young men as well as Fathers'; and on the other hand, consider the unhappiness of so many still alive, who live, or rather who drag a weary existence outside of the Congregation; and if some one among them far from deploring their condition, congratulates himself, he is only still more deserving of compassion and of tears. Let us, therefore, be on our guard, because a repetition of the faults of which they have made no account has been the cause of their ruin and has made them lose their vocation. This is the reason why I here recall several things that I have already spoken of and published, and that will be of service to the new-comers.

In the first place, I will never give, and I cannot in conscience give a dispensation from the vows to him that asks it without a necessary and just cause; but it is not the business of the subject to judge of this necessity and of this justice; for when he is under the influence of passion, it is not he, but his passion that will judge. Therefore, I renew the formal prohibition, under pain of grave sin, that no one leave the Congregation without my permission. If any one from the other houses wishes to call on me, let him ask permission of the local Superior; if he cannot

obtain permission, let him write to me, and let him not leave the house without my express permission. This command I also give under obedience, but not under formal obedience; only it should be known that he that acts contrary to it will be subjected to a penance.

In case any one without a just cause asks for a dispensation to leave the Congregation, I renew the order already given; namely, one should first endeavor to quiet him who is thus agitated by temptation; and if after that he does not wish to be satisfied, let him be kept in strict seclusion for a month, with three days of fast on bread and water every week. Moreover, let each one know that if any one without just cause, through caprice or passion should ask a dispensation from his vows, by that very act he renders himself unworthy of remaining in the Congregation, and can be justly expelled from it even against his will.

You know the case of the Brother who, having gone away without permission several months ago, continues to live at enmity with God, with a sacrilege on his soul, without finding any one to absolve him. His example should make all those tremble that still have a fear of sin. Again, when the temptation comes, communicate it at once to those who you know are able to help you. Understand well, that the temptation against our vocation is for each one of us the most hurtful that the devil can offer, because of its sad consequences. Therefore, my Brethren, let each one of you, every day, while visiting the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin, ask in a special manner for perseverance in your vocation. I advise each one in particular not to trust his own good resolutions or feelings. When passion comes, light is lost, and everything seems changed. To speak the truth, I have seen enough in others to make me tremble for all of you.

All, and especially the young members, should know

that it is a grave fault to ask in case of sickness the permission to go home to breathe the native air. General experience teaches us that when one lives in Community and according to regular observance, the air of one's native country and of the paternal home is an air that is pestilential to the interior spirit and to one's vocation. For this reason let each one know that in cases where a change of air has been ordered by the physicians, the Superiors, according as they think best, shall send him to one of the houses of the Congregation situated in another place, and let all henceforth renounce the idea of even going elsewhere, because experience has shown what temptations may be introduced by such indulgences.

I would remind all that it is not permitted to go to the houses of seculars, and still less of relatives without a just cause and an express permission. Such is the rule, and I wish this rule to be observed with even more rigor than other rules. Only in case of the mortal illness of a father or a mother the Rule permits a visit. But there have been several who in similar cases have sent word to their dying parents that their presence and their care were not necessary, and would only serve to increase their sufferings, and that they would recommend them to God where they were. They have abstained from going, and I have been greatly edified by their conduct. It is certain that on such occasions they have rendered themselves very agreeable to God by the example that they have given to others, as well as by the mortification that they have practised.

I recommend again to all, to Fathers, young men, and Brothers, obedience to any one that may be the Superior of a house, even to him whose functions give him for the moment a right to command, and were he even the least of the brethren of the Congregation. It is on such occasions that we see who is truly obedient. I am not edified so much by the obedience given to me, as by that shown to

local Rectors, Prefects, Ministers, and other officials that preside over the work of which they have charge. Faults are committed against obedience. I trust that for the future, with God's help, certain things of this kind that give me great pain will not occur again. Obedience is the only thing that can preserve the Congregation, since it is that which inspires fervor; but obedience, I repeat, is to be paid him who may hold the place of Superior, otherwise it will be all over with the Congregation. All other faults can be more easily pardoned than the faults of disobedience.

The faults against poverty are not less serious. Hence I recommend to all the local Superiors, present and future, that when anything is given through friendship to a member of the Congregation, such as a snuff-box, a skull-cap, handkerchiefs, stockings, and such like things, they should not let him use them, but should it be necessary they should give him something else of the same kind. This precaution is necessary in order to maintain the spirit of poverty in its purity; otherwise many inconveniences would result therefrom, and a door would be opened to the destruction of poverty, and poverty is another virtue that preserves the spirit of the Congregation. As to the garments, habits, simars, and cloaks, when they are old and torn, let the Superiors be careful to have them mended as long as they are worth being mended. The Congregation is to be pitied if the subjects are ashamed to appear in patched garments. I hope that we may not have to deplore a like misfortune.

As to what concerns myself, I again say, let all write freely to me without fear of importuning me or hindering the publication of my books. As Superior I am obliged to listen to the humblest Brother of the Congregation, and to read the letters that are addressed to me; this I am obliged to do, but I am not obliged to publish books. I can only employ myself in this way when I have spare time in the

evening, after having listened to all that wished to speak to me and after having answered all the letters that have been addressed to me. If any one, notwithstanding, abstains from speaking or writing to me concerning his own welfare or the welfare of the Congregation I make this a case of conscience, and will ask an account of it from him on the day of judgment. I protest with regard to this that if I were actually on my death-bed, I should have nothing to reproach myself on this score. When it happens that any one writes to me or comes to speak to me on things that are of interest to himself or the Congregation, I lay aside everything. I do not write with my own hand, because ever since my late illness the weakness of my head hinders me from writing; and when a religious wishes his name to remain secret I so manage that it is not known even to him that writes for me; for when it is necessary I address it myself; I force myself to write the whole letter at intervals with my own hand.

Let every one remove from his mind the impression that I manifest the secrets that have been confided to me either orally or in writing. I am very careful what I say, and I tear up the letters. This fear often arises, for example, from the fact that when I correct any one or do anything that displeases a subject, the circumstances are easily combined in order to conjecture who it was that has written or spoken to me, and at times it is rightly conjectured. Then the complaint is made that I reveal secrets. However, let no one pretend that I am obliged to keep a thing secret so that it may not injure him that writes or speaks to me. To complain that I tell others certain things that do not require secrecy, is ridiculous. If however any one desires that I should keep a thing secret that of itself requires no secrecy, let him tell me so expressly, and I will comply with his wish.

In general, I recommend to you a few things, namely:

1. Let the Mass be said with gravity; for I hear that many say it without observing order and decorum in the ceremonies, or say it too precipitately. We preach to others; and then . . . . .

2. As to the Fathers that have travelling bags that may be locked, they should, when at home, always leave them open, so that the Superiors may examine them as often as they wish; otherwise they may keep them locked.

3. No one should take away the writings of another without the express permission of the Superior. On this subject I have heard many complaints on the part of some who have lost their writings.

4. When a punishment is inflicted on the subjects by the Rector Major or other Superiors, let no one endeavor to find out by captious questions who gave information to the Superiors of any disorder or any fault by addressing those who he suspects have given the information; for this would injure the common good, since some fearing that they would not be able to know how to answer when questioned, would abstain from telling the Superiors what they should tell. This especially holds good for those subjects that have been appointed Zelators, or those that are suspected of being secret inspectors.

5. I recommend anew, that all should hand over uncertain restitutions to the Superior of the mission, and to the Superior of the house when they are at home.

6. It is also again recommended not to make known our affairs to strangers who through the fault of the subjects are better informed than we ourselves. Even disedifying things are communicated to them, and they afterwards spread them everywhere.

7. Finally, I again remind you that when any of the Fathers go to preach novenas, triduos, special exercises, etc., or when they have to discharge any similar duty, they should observe the same regulations as to food as when

they are on missions. I recommend this particularly to the one that is chosen Superior, because he must render an account, and on him the penance will be imposed.

I embrace you all in Jesus Christ. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 309.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector at Caposele.

He exhorts him to moderate his labors, and gives him advice in regard to an important matter.

Live Jesus, Mary, Michael, and Joseph!

NOCERA, September 24, 1758.

I am obliged for just reasons to confirm you in your office of Rector for the coming three years; but I do not wish you to undergo excessive fatigue as you have been doing. I say no more for the present. You must come here after we find out the result of the illness of the archbishop and after you have regulated your affairs conformably to my instructions. We shall then speak of several things, and in particular of the moderation with which you should apply to your work; for your health cannot endure so great fatigue.

We shall speak together among other things about Brother Matteo. In fact he or Brother Pasquale is to come here; but I think Brother Matteo would be preferable, since Brother Pasquale has of old ruined his health in this house. If then you could send Brother Matteo beforehand, it would be well.

I expect you and Father Apice, as soon as you can set out. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

As for the affair of *Postulation*,[1] I have maturely reflected on it, and this is my advice. Not only would it be necessary to wait for the death of the archbishop, but we should have to proceed in everything with great secrecy; for if the proposal is not accepted the new archbishop will always feel incensed against us for having interested ourselves in favor of another. The strictest secrecy should be kept. Perhaps it would be better to abstain from all intervention. For *postulations* are, I think useless. Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original, the property of Signor Marchese Ferraioli at Rome.

LETTER 310.

To the Rectors, Ministers, Prefects and Superiors of the Missions.

Various recommendations.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, September 30, 1758.

1. I recommend that the Prefects of the Brothers should be appointed, and when one is wanting another should be substituted.

2. I recommend that according to the Constitution a consultation should be held, in conformity with the Rule, as to the necessary expenses. In view of the actual poverty and embarrassed circumstances, when the expenses go beyond the sum of forty ducats,[2] I request the Superiors to

[1] It seems that in view of the death of the Archbishop of Conza, which occurred on October 24, the Fathers of the house at Caposele wished to propose for his successor a person who in his quality of bishop could not be *elected*, but had to be *asked for*. Hence the canonical term of *Postulation*. We add that the See of Conza was subject to *Pontifical nomination*.

[2] 40 ducats = 170 francs.

give me notice beforehand, since many useless expenses have been incurred in certain houses. This, however, is not understood in regard to the provision that is to be made for subsistence. If the Consultors, who have been appointed are not at home at the time when the consultation is to take place, there shall be called in those Fathers of the house that are the oldest in the order of their entrance into the Congregation.

3. All the shirts shall bear the mark of the house, so that on missions there may not be any confusion on this account; however, one should not be so uncharitable as to refuse the use of shirts to others that may stand in need of them.

4. I recommend in general to all Superiors that they should avoid all blameworthy partiality.

5. The Minister shall not give to the subjects of the Congregation anything to eat outside of the house, excepting fruit that is owned by the Congregation.

6. I earnestly recommend that in regard to food you treat well the strangers that make the exercises; for I hear that for some time there have been great complaints in regard to this matter. On account of a little expense one endangers the great good that the exercises produce.

7. I recommend to the Rectors to remind their subjects that every month they should make a manifestation of conscience. They should also have bread made twice a week, if possible.

(*What follows should be read only to the Fathers, and should not be communicated to the young men.*)

To you especially, my dear Fathers, I recommend the practice of holy obedience, not so much towards me as towards the Superiors of the houses and of the missions. On this point I experienced last year many annoyances; I do not enter into particulars, because I hope that these annoyances will no more be given. It appears that at present the Superiors must repeat an order a thousand

times in order to be obeyed; and even then on the part of some subjects there are so many excuses, so many objections that, finally, the Superiors are obliged in order not to trouble them to relieve them of obedience. I repeat, I do not wish for good reasons to reprove in particular any one of those who I know has committed faults; but I remember and will remember what I know.

Hence I recommend above all to the Fathers that they should obey, especially on missions, any subject, whoever he may be, that takes the place of the Superior. We have at present so many young men full of talent and piety, who can do a great deal of good. About twenty-five of them have asked me to go among the heathen, and they have asked me so courageously and fervently that I have been filled with joy. But when they go out to work in the ministry and continually see objections, excuses and the unwillingness of the old Fathers to obey the Superiors, they will do the same thing; and then how will the Congregation get on?

I also recommend that on missions one should not be too free with the people of the place. We should act towards them with the greatest politeness, but we should never be wanting in gravity, so that they may learn and preserve towards us the veneration that is due to men who are holy and without blemish; this being necessary for their edification. Otherwise, if we unbosom ourselves in conversing with them, in talking about things that do not concern the soul, they will discover in us a thousand defects, and will by no means be edified. This is a thing that has already been spoken of more than once; but I regret that faults are always committed in this matter. If any one should not correct himself on this point, I shall be obliged to keep him away from the missions. Let no one, I beg you, meddle with the affairs that do not concern the conscience of the people that attend the mission. As to certain things that

might cause some disorder or inconvenience, let them never be done without counsel and without obedience. *Non omnia expediunt*, [all things are not expedient].

I recommend moreover that the sermon on prayer should never be omitted, and in case this cannot be done, let the subject be treated at length in the last discourse at the close.

It must be remarked, as is said in the Constitution, that on the missions it is not allowed to partake of dainties no matter in what manner they may have been received.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 311.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

Details relative to pecuniary matters and to the purchase of books.

[November 1758.]

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

I have received twenty-one ducats, that is seventeen and a half for *Tournely*, twenty *carlini* for the other books, and fifteen *carlini* for the *Novenas*.

As for the *Novenas*, I send twelve of them. Of these twelve, six are paid with the fifteen *carlini*, and for the six others, if you succeed in selling them, keep the money for me, for I am overwhelmed with debt.

As for the copies of *Tournely*, we had already written to Venice for the ten copies, because there are none here; but ten copies cost at least twenty-four or twenty-five ducats; it will therefore be necessary that you have an understanding with Father Apice, because I cannot now remit even three *carlini* to pay the debt that I owe.

I was also expecting you here to speak to you about the manner in which you might spend the money that has been

bequeathed;[1] but now I hear from a letter written by Father Ferrara that you have a debt of three hundred and fifty ducats. Now there is no remedy; this money must be paid. The bedsteads must also be made, and the rest of the money will be spent on the building; hence it is not necessary for you to come here about this matter, because I did not know anything about the debt of three hundred and fifty ducats. However, that the order given in the letter may be observed, inform me in what way you intend to spend the rest of the money, after having deducted that debt and the expenses for the bedsteads. I say only this to you: if even I should need to borrow fifty ducats to pay off a certain debt, I shall send you word; but I hope to remedy this in another way.

Those copies of the Moral Theology, bound in two volumes, which I have sent you, are worth twenty-six *carlini*; but I shall be satisfied with twenty-five, and even with twenty.

I have made a mistake: those copies of the Moral Theology are still here; I will, therefore, send them to you on Saturday through the carriers of Teora; when they reach you pay the freight and I will settle with you when I write.

As for the young man from Avigliano,[2] it is not necessary to have him come here; you may send him at once to Iliceto, since he has been already received. Send with him twenty-five ducats, and tell the Superior of Iliceto expressly from me that *without interpretations* he should immediately have some new clothes made for him, namely, a cassock, a simar and a cloak.

1 The Archbishop of Conza, Mgr. Giuseppe Nicolai, who died November 8, of this year, had left a thousand ducats to our house at Caposele.

2 Raffaelle Palumbo, a native of Avigliano, in the diocese of Potenza, began his novitiate December 25, 1758.

Yes, I will write to Father Margotta; but I hear that he is now prevented on account of the money that has to be collected from Gessari for Grazioli. I shall tell him to hurry. I bless your Reverence and all.

Do not forget to have copied for me the treatise on Sacred Scripture by Genovese, which I mentioned to you.

I send the image of the crucifix with that of the Madonna for Frater de Iacobis, the other pictures of the Madonna are for the other students. Tell this Frater that in regard to the other thing about which he writes to me I have heard nothing, and therefore I do not write specially to him. I have none of the little rosaries that are carried in the hand.

A copy of *Duplessis* [1] I have tried to procure at Naples, but I have not succeeded. I would therefore wish you to endeavor to obtain it from the Frenchmen.[2]

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] In regard to Frater Nigro I must here add that I will not have him take any Orders, unless he makes an assignment of his property, because I do not wish the Congregation to be disquieted.[3]

After the original preserved in the church of St. Paul at Piacenza.

[1] A work of Charles Duplessis d' Argentré, Doctor of the Sorbonne; he died in 1740 Bishop of Tulle. In 1702 he published, among other works, the *Elements of Theology* in Latin.

[2] The Frenchmen, that is, the Fathers of the Mission.

[3] The laws of the kingdom did not permit to those that were the only sons to become priests; and because D. Lorenzo Nigro was the only son of his family St. Alphonsus required him to renounce his inheritance, so that the Congregation might not be molested. It seems that this renouncement took place; because in September 1759, D. Lorenzo was ordained priest at Benevento, outside of the kingdom.

LETTER 312.

To the Same.

He speaks of the utility of having critical spirits in the Community, of his poverty, and of some other things.

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

NOCERA, November 22, 1758.

I never appointed Fr. de Iacobis, I never dreamed of appointing him, nor do I intend to do so. But I say that I could have appointed him, and in case I had appointed him I should not have recognized you in the remarks that you have sent to me.[1] Moreover, to none of the subjects can it be forbidden to write to me. As to the visiting the rooms, I never gave permission, nor do I know who gave it. And the affair about the *Bambino* [Infant Jesus] has also displeased me.

Besides, speaking in general, I must say that these critical spirits, as long as they do not go too far and do not assume an authority that they have not, are very useful to the Community, because they serve to keep every one on his guard. This is exactly the case of Father Ferrara who by his censures is very little loved by others, but, to speak the truth, he greatly assists me in maintaining regular observance. Now what is to be done? In Communities one must swallow these bitter pills, but *omnia cooperantur in bonum* [All things work together unto good — *Rom.* viii. 28.]

This evening I dismissed from the Congregation Father

1 It seems that Father Caione had complained that the saint had appointed Frater D. Sebastiano de Iacobis as secret inspector of the Community at Caposele, an appointment that gave so much the more displeasure, since he was only twenty-two years of age, and was professed but one year.

Barberio [1] not on account of grave faults, but for just reasons.

Let us now come to another pill. Here on account of the litigation that is going on with that *blessed* priest of Calvanico, we shall have to come to some agreement, so as to free ourselves at least from vexation; and I fear that there will be no other way of obtaining money. Hence I beg you to lay aside for this purpose one hundred ducats. I do not wish to say that the house is to lose thereby, but assistance must be given to me, and afterwards I shall have you re-imbursed.

Tell Frater [D. Giovanni] Lauria that I have received his letter; that I have no more to say at present; when the time comes we shall speak about the matter.

Tell Frater Nigro to drive away all fear. He has made the vows and has been accepted. How foolish is this fear of being dismissed! As regards other things let them be settled by the Prefect, and in default of the Prefect by your Reverence.

I have written in the mean time a reprimand for Frater de Iacobis. Indeed, my dear Gasparo, you will have to bear these contradictions in every Community, even if you were a St. Francis. How many of them have I to bear! How many anonymous letters containing reproaches and insults!

Moreover, I must inform you that Don Silvestro, a nephew of Abate Ciceri [2] is going to the seminary, at our expense, and money is required. Every house shall pay

[1] Father D. Sabino Barberio, born December 23, 1712, had been professed only seven weeks when he was dismissed from the Institute.

[2] Abate Giovanni Ciceri of Grottola in the diocese of Matera had conceded to St. Alphonsus, November 3, 1757, the right of giving a name for the laic chaplaincy founded by the same Abate, with the obligation, as it seems, of contributing to the maintenance of one of his family in a seminary.

its share; at present send ten ducats. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 313.

To the Same.

Various recommendations relative to the Community at Caposele.

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

NOCERA, December 12, 1758.

As regards the missions, your presence is more necessary at home than on the missions; hence govern yourself accordingly, but under present circumstances the less you have to go out, the better I shall be pleased.

As for Father [D. Ignazio] Fiore if he is not yet twenty-nine years of age, I cannot grant him permission to hear the confessions of women. — But you will say *why can others do so?* etc. — But this would take too long, and so it is not necessary to speak of it.

In reference to the quartan fever with which Father [Domenico] Caputo is afflicted, try to procure the recipe from Don Domenico Antonio Cappuccio; the medicine consists of brandy and chincona bark; it is a great remedy and cured Father Landi at once; but if I mistake not, ten paroxysms of fever have to be gone through.

I have received the ten ducats. Here we are engaged in litigations and greatly involved. The Lord is chastising us.

Father Fiore will likely have to return to Ciorani to teach the humanities; although I should wish to have him stay there as little as possible. — And as Father Margotta says, it will not be improbable that your Reverence will have to go to give the exercises to the clergy of Cava two weeks before

Septuagesima Sunday, the exercises to begin on Tuesday. I bless all.

The Brother tailor has not yet come, and here we have been expecting him.

Father Brescia's work, which Father Leo at your house procured for himself saying that he would procure it at the expense of Caposele, costs five *carlini* and a half; you will please therefore send the money.

In regard to Frater Nigro, you have sent me no answer. What have you concluded to do? I answer: if he does not assign his entire portion to his relatives, I cannot have him ordained at Benevento. He must give up all; so that those interested can no longer lay claim to anything. See that this affair be concluded as soon as possible.

I hear that you have procured the works of St. Bonaventure which will perhaps cost more than twenty ducats. Have patience; henceforth when the expenses for books are considerable, I wish to be informed about the matter; so I have written to the other houses.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the Orlando family in Torre Annunziata.

LETTER 314.

To D. Giovanni Battista Gargano, a Student of the Congregation.

Various points in regard to spiritual direction.

Live Jesus and Mary!

NOCERA, December 13, 1758.

In respect to remaining up in the evening, if I mistake not, I have already written to you my way of thinking

about the matter, namely, it matters little that you have to study; I wish you to go to bed like the rest.

In regard to fasting, if there is question of fasting on bread and water, I permit it only once a week; you may on another day restrict yourself to bread and soup [*minestra*].

As for direction, it is true that the use of discipline and little chains belongs also to the interior, but as these are things that may afterwards be indirectly found out by the Prefect, it is also necessary to have his permission for using them. I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] I cannot grant the request that you make, because it is against the Rule, and because it would establish a precedent, so that if I grant it to you, I should afterwards have to grant it to others.

The Rule requires that the students should be directed by the Prefect. . . . . It is my wish that all the students should submit to his direction; for I hold for certain that God gives the Prefect special assistance because we keep the Rule; even if we feel repugnance in keeping it. God favors not what is agreeable to us, but what is done out of obedience.

After the original in possession of Archdeacon D. Michele Camera, at Amalfi.

LETTER 315.

To an Ecclesiastic.

He congratulates him on his promotion to a dignity.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, January 9, 1759.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: It was to me not a wonderful, not an unexpected thing, to hear from you that

the election has turned out in your favor, because I foretold this not less on account of the merit acquired by the innumerable good qualities that adorn your mind, as on account of the very high opinion and good will that every one entertained about you in this city. Hence the Canons have acted in accordance with your merits.

I rejoice with you, Very Reverend Sir, and in the mean time hope that the Lord will assist you and help you to gain merits for eternity.

Kissing your hand, I remain most respectfully,

Your very humble and very devoted servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 316.

To Father Antonio Tannoia.

Various communications.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, January 9, 1759.

Since Frater Buonopane still remembers his philosophy, I say yes, and it would be well to send him to Ciorani,[1] so that he may at least refresh his memory. Write to Father Blasucci to arrange the matter.

In regard to Father [D. Alessandro] de Meo, I have already written to Father Caione, who holds a different opinion; it is therefore necessary to have patience. Father Caione will have to come himself in a few days to arrange definitely the mission at Trani. I do not know whether the date can be fixed before the first day of Lent.

I rejoice that Santorelli is doing well; but we are forced

[1] Frater Fabio Buonopane had made his profession, December 25, 1758, in the house at Iliceto.

to send him to some monastery to find out his inclination while the "Writer" at Naples is creating an uproar and threatens to have recourse to the king. With Mgr. Volpe [Bishop of Nocera] who has the affair in hand we have been thinking of sending him to the monastery of Father Druisi which is under his direction at Solofra. A better monastery than this we cannot find. But there will certainly be many a struggle,[1] because others sent by relatives will come for the purpose of finding out things and of tempting him. Hence let him prepare himself, because after a short time, when I shall send him word, he will have to set out.

Yes, I will send the package to Brother Francesco [Tartaglione at Naples].

As to the stipend of the Mass of Father Maione, what does Father Mazzini think, since after the month of May the students are to come to Caposele to study Moral Theology? The most that I have settled with Father Ferrara is that secretly one half [of the stipends] of the Masses be given to you and the other half to this place.

Perhaps about Lent Don Domenico Cacciatore will come to you to make a short novitiate of four or five months, because he has again been received on account of the many good signs that he has manifested to me.[2] He is now on missions with our Fathers. I bless all. Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

I particularly recommend to you to send the enclosed letter to Monsignor d' Amato in Lacedogna, and to procure

[1] Constantino Santorelli came forth victorious from all the attacks made upon him, and thus had the consolation of entering the novitiate, February 12, and to make his profession December 25, 1759. He died at Nocera in 1787. His spirit of obedience won for him the title: *Maximus in minimis* (Very great in very small things).

[2] D. Domenico Cacciatore was one of the four students seduced by Father D. Giuseppe Muscari (see Letter 124). But although the saint had re-admitted him, he nevertheless, it is not known why, did not re-enter the Congregation.

for me an answer. I wish to obtain a document from him; for the people of Caposele have prepared for us a fine lawsuit on account of the thousand ducats bequeathed to us by the archbishop.[1] Live Jesus and Mary! I beg you to have the answer delivered as soon as possible in a safe way.

Of those books, on *Death*,[2] send some to some friends at Foggia and at Melfi, so that they may at least examine them.

I am sending more copies, now that there is an opportunity, so that you may have them sold during Lent when the spiritual exercises are given at the house at Iliceto. And when you have an opportunity, send a copy to Corato.[3] Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] I send the little books on *Death*, and *Counsels* [*on religious Vocation*], in order that when an occasion offers, you may spread them through the countries of the Puglia; place them therefore on your table.

Whoever examines well this little work on *Death* will certainly purchase it.

After the original preserved in our house at Pagani,

[1] Mgr. Niccolò d' Amato, before becoming Bishop of Lacedogna, had been up to the year 1749, vicar of Mgr. Nicolai, Archbishop of Conza, and thus having been present at all the transactions preceding the foundation of Caposele and well instructed in regard to the whole question, was the only one who could help our Fathers and quiet our opponents.

[2] On *Death*, that is, the "Preparation for Death," a work published by the saint during the preceding year.

[3] Native city of Father Tannoia.

LETTER 317.

To Signor Pietro de Robertis, at Naples.

He announces to him a visit and thanks him for an important service.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, February 23, 1759.

Dear Sir: In compliance with your request I long ago charged Father Celestino [de Robertis] to inform you that he would go to see you at Naples immediately after the mission given at Bosco; but the day before yesterday, at the moment when I was leaving Nola I learned that he had not yet paid the visit.

I have reprimanded him for his want of regard for which he rendered me responsible to you, and to-day I take this occasion to assure you that he will call upon you the second week of Lent.

I must also offer you my most sincere thanks for your memorial relative to our process; this will take me to Naples the first week of Lent, and I will not fail to go myself to consult you once more in regard to this affair. Baron Sarnelli pretends to have the wind in his favor and his little vessel is vigorously managed by him; but I have found new reasons that militate in our favor. We shall examine them together, please God.

I remain most cordially, my dear Sir,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the de Robertis family, at Sieti, a hamlet of Giffoni (Province of Salerno).

LETTER 318.

To a Father of His Congregation.

Recommendation of a person tormented by interior trials.—He blames him very much for entertaining an opinion contrary to the infallibility of the Pope.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, February 27, [1759?]

In reference to that beautiful property, I do not wish my conscience to be charged. . . . . In a word, deliver me from all scruple.

If you are going to give the retreat at N., remember that there lives there a good soul, I should say, a great soul, who is in the habit of writing to me. It is an afflicted soul who thinks that she hates God, and the like things. God conducts her by the way of the cross. Encourage her; if you think fit, do not allow her to be present at soul-stirring sermons. Persuade her, above all, not to omit the daily Communion that I have allowed her.

I love to think that you are not a disciple of Arnauld, as you are, I am told, already of Giovenino, who refuses to believe in the infallibility of the Pope, *nisi consensus Ecclesiæ accedat* [unless with the consent of the Church]; this, I confess has scandalized me. The French are known to do such a thing; but it is too much to hear that an Italian priest holds the definitions of the Pope to be fallible while Bellarmine, Bannez, and Suarez regard our opinion as *almost an article of faith*, Bellarmine saying that the contrary opinion *videtur omnino erronea et hæresi proxima!* [seems to be altogether erroneous and next to heresy!]

You see then what it is to be a probabiliorist: it is to hold as more probable opinions that are near heresy!

Enough of this. If you wish to hold this opinion, I beg you not to tell any one that you hold it, otherwise some

young man resting on your authority may also hold it to be probable.

I salute and embrace you all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 319.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

He asks his aid in order to oblige a bishop.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, March 19, [1759?]

Mgr. di Melfi has written to me, begging me most earnestly to send a Father to give the spiritual exercises to those whom he is to ordain on Holy Saturday.

I have written to him that this will be impossible, though I would write for a Father. I also write to your Reverence to ask whether you can give a Father of your house; but I write to you only for the purpose of saying that I have written.

See whether you can send Father Agostino. I should not like to displease the bishop, as he has written to me three times. Perhaps Father Strina would do better.

O God! what perplexity and what confusion during this year, and how many requests and how many are displeased! Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 320.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, Rector of the House at Iliceto and Master of Novices.

He speaks of the date to be fixed for an important mission.

(*Read at the end.*)

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

NOCERA, April 12, 1759.

These large missions about which we should confer oftener, should first be applied for and should have the time fixed, not once, but several times.

Yes, the first mission applied for the past winter was the mission at Ariano; but I answered that there was question of giving it at Easter, and I also said that if this mission could not be helped along in regard to the expenses, it could not be given.

Afterwards I had no other application, and not even a letter from the bishop; hence I thought that the mission would not be given, and I appointed other missions. Now all at once I hear that the mission is being given, and that the time fixed is immediately after Easter.

Now I cannot send you any help, because two other missions have been promised, and especially the mission at Mercato S. Severino, which is to be a large mission. At the most, I shall be able to send you help if the mission of Ariano begins on Saturday, not on the 21st, but on the 28th of this month.

Let this arrangement be made: You will begin the mission on the 28th, and during the mission of Ariano I will send you help.

If then you should think of beginning the mission after the said time, you will have again to inform me, so that I may arrange the matter. In the mean time you may finish one or two little missions so as not to lose time.

When the mission has begun at Ariano it will be well to begin, two or three days afterwards, the exercises for the nuns, as there are no more than two monasteries.

Let me know what Father Fiocchi has done in regard to Maffei, whether any agreement has been made.[1]

We are again in conflict with Baron Sarnelli.[2] In regard to the other affairs, Father Ferrara will write to you.

I bless you all.

In fifteen days you may send for the other books which I have promised on account of the clothing that was furnished. But let me know how many books you have received on my account.

After the mission Father Garzilli will go to Caposele, and Father Nittoli to Iliceto.

I bless you.

Brother Alfonso,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] Having reflected more carefully on the matter, I think that in order not to lose the time that is to elapse before the 28th of this month it would be better for you to begin the mission, as you have written, on the 21st, Holy Saturday; because I will begin here a little mission on the Tuesday after Easter, so that when the latter is finished the Fathers may go to Ariano.

It is understood that I will send you among other Fathers [Stefano] Liguori and Father [Carlo] Gaiano, so that they may assist you in giving the exercises to the nuns or the priests. But you will have to wait for them, since

1 Francesco Antonio Maffei a man of very great influence at Iliceto began thenceforth to molest our Congregation.

2 Baron Sarnelli, after having, December 7, made an agreement (of which mention is made in Letter 266) by which the donation given by his brother was ratified, and after having given up every claim, began again to molest the Congregation by creating new law-suits and by annoying the Institute during many years.

LETTER 323.

To Sister Carlotta Fraggianni, in the Monastery at Sarno.

He accedes to her request.

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

NOCERA, June 9, 1759.

When Father Celestino [de Robertis] returns I will send him to you, but only for three days. Live Jesus and Mary!

I recommend myself to your prayers and I remain

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 324.

To Father Antonio Tannoia.

Earnest request for prayers.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, June 14, 1759.

I am glad that the statement of the Brother is not true.

I am sorry that you are so unwell. Probably Father Ferrara with Father Corsano will arrive at your place to drink the waters of Monticchio.

Let the novices pray in a special manner to my intention for three evenings. One annoyance after another together with law-suits against the Congregation are coming upon us, and particularly do I fear that a great trial will befall us if God does not come to our assistance. And with [Baron Nicola] Sarnelli our troubles have begun.

Father Fiocchi remains here at Ciorani, but I will not fail

to send him to Iliceto to talk to you in order to have an understanding with Maffei. Live Jesus and Mary!

Believe me, dear Father,

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 325.

To Canon Giuseppe Sparano, at Naples.

He declares himself ready to grant the requests of the Archbishop of Naples.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, September 7, 1759.

Since his Eminence [Cardinal Sersale] and your Reverence wish me to give some occupation to the young man Don Giuseppe, I have thought of keeping him here with me in this house at Nocera, since the young men that have finished scholastic philosophy are just now going through the course of Moral Theology.

I shall however send him to the house at Ciorani when the exercises are given there; and then I shall have him return to this place.

I have also received the order of his Eminence to give the exercises to the *Pellegrini*;[1] I hope that I will be able to do so; but we must ask God to give me the necessary help during that time, since as soon as winter sets in my troubles in the chest begin, and for this reason my stay at Naples will weigh heavily upon me at such a time, and the time of Lent may perhaps be more injurious to me.

However, I cannot oppose the wish of his Eminence and the honor that the gentlemen of the Congregation wish to confer upon me.

1 That is, the Congregation or Confraternity of Pilgrims which had for its object to give lodging to pilgrims.

As for the book,[1] we have arranged everything. It will be necessary for me to have certain pages re-printed; but we must have patience! Enough; I did not wish to yield at all, as the revisor desired me to do, and I did not insert a word that could redound to the injury of the Church.

Humbly kissing your hand, I remain,

Your very humble, devoted, and grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 326.

To Mgr. Isidoro Sanchez de Luna,[2] Archbishop of Salerno.

Request for faculties for all the missionaries of the Congregation.

[November 3, 1759.]

Most Reverend and Dear Sir: Don Alfonso de Liguori, Rector Major of the Congregation of missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer, suppliantly exposes to you that in view of the occupation of the priests of his Congregation who are always engaged now in the holy missions, now in every kind of exercises of piety during the whole course of the year, he obtained from your predecessor Mgr. Rossi of happy memory the general communication of all his faculties as to the administration of the sacrament of penance and the preaching of the divine word, without any limitation, not even of cases that require special mention, and without

1 There is question here, probably, of the little work entitled: "Dissertatio de justa prohibitione et abolitione librorum nocuæ lectionis." (Dissertation on the Just Prohibition and Abolition of Bad Books.)

2 Mgr. Isidoro Sanchez de Luna Benedictine of Monte Cassino, born at Naples, November 16, 1705; was first bishop of Ariano from May 6, 1748 to April 22, 1754, then archbishop of Taranto from April 22, 1754 till May 28, 1759, and finally Archbishop of Salerno from May 28, 1759 till the year 1783.

exception, not even of nuns, through the whole diocese of Salerno, together with the power of communicating these faculties to the subjects of his Congregation according to the dictates of prudence, in imitation of his predecessors since the time of Mgr. Capua of illustrious memory. In asking for these faculties the petitioner also takes into consideration that as the subjects of said Congregation are distributed among many houses, and by order of the Rector Major have frequently to pass from one house to the other, and as frequently the subjects of the different houses have to unite as is required on the occasions of missions, of retreats, and other exercises, which are ordinarily given by said Congregation, it would be impossible to accomplish all these works if they would always have to return to make requests for new faculties to be presented now by this one, now by that one.

The petitioner therefore asks your Grace for the communication of these the above-mentioned faculties, granting them in the aforesaid manner as is done by all the prelates in whose dioceses the Congregation labors, just as it has and always will be ready to serve your Grace in your diocese of Salerno and to obey your every command.

To the petition the archbishop thus answered:

Mindful of the well-known virtues, the exemplary conduct, the learning, discretion, and great prudence of the petitioner, we grant to the same, on the occasions of holy missions and exercises which he may give in our whole diocese, the power, whenever it may seem suitable to him, to communicate our faculties of reserved cases to any of his subjects to whom he may see fit to give them; these faculties being granted as long as it seems good to us.

SALERNO, from our archiepiscopal palace, November 3, 1759.

ISIDORO, Archbishop of Salerno.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

As for the book,[1] we have arranged everything. It will be necessary for me to have certain pages re-printed; but we must have patience! Enough; I did not wish to yield at all, as the revisor desired me to do, and I did not insert a word that could redound to the injury of the Church.

Humbly kissing your hand, I remain,

Your very humble, devoted, and grateful servant,

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SALERNO, from our archiepiscopal palace, November 3, 1759.

ISIDORO, Archbishop of Salerno.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 327.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Sparano.

He marks out for her a practical rule of conduct in regard to a particular case.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, November 26, 1759.

I answer your letter. I would do so in a more precise manner, but in order to do so I should have to put some questions to you. I therefore answer you in a general manner, according to the rules applicable to every one, and I say that neither temptations nor bad inclinations are sins, but the consent averted to and desired is a sin.

Every time that you have not consented to a bad thought in a grave matter, even though you should have some inclination or pleasure to speak, you have not committed a mortal sin. It is true, you must avoid speaking through a natural inclination. In this kind of interviews you should direct your intention only to God and to your spiritual profit. While thus engaged in this conversation with a right intention it might happen to you while speaking that you feel a certain natural complacency. As long as you do not give consent in matters that are grave, you may be certain that you do not sin mortally; you are not even obliged to confess the circumstance. At all events it will be sufficient for you to say: *I accuse myself of all the bad complacencies in matters not grave*, without saying with whom; and in doubt whether your consent was deliberate, you need not confess it.

Do not therefore confess any more the past doubts which you mentioned to me, if you have not given consent, and a certain consent, in the matter of mortal sin.

But tremble, for I fear that this is the last appeal that God makes to you. Then when you see any natural

inclination, use all possible circumspection in order to avoid every attachment. You are on "the cutting-edge of the knife:" *either a saint, or in hell!* But God wishes you to be a saint. Flee then with all your strength from natural attachments, and pray without ceasing while saying: *Mercy, O Lord! Do not allow me ever to abandon Thee. To Thee only do I wish to give my heart, and to give it entirely.*

If God gives you consolations in your prayer, be thankful to him; but do not seek these consolations. You will have to pass through many great trials; this is at least my opinion. In prayer you should repeat again and again the words: *Mercy, O Lord! mercy, O Lord!* Have also recourse to the Madonna. Go to Communion often, and as often as possible, for you need strength. Never omit to make a two hours' meditation, even though you should feel therein the agonies of death.

Father Mazzini is not here. He is giving a mission and will return, December 8.

Recommend me to Jesus Christ, and take courage. That you are in the grace of God; I have a firm belief; and I am morally convinced that in the case of which you speak, you have not committed any mortal sin; if you had committed a mortal sin, you would be certain of having done so. I believe, on the contrary, that God will give you the grace to fear mortal sin, and that he will give you the desire to love him. Therefore, take courage.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 328.

To Father Pasquale de Matteis,[1] of the Society of Jesus at Naples.

Grief of the saint on learning the trials of the Society.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, December 3, 1759.

Very Reverend and Dear Father: I received the information that you have sent me about the book, and I thank you for it.

In regard to the news from Portugal,[2] I have always felt great sorrow on account of what has happened; all those to whom I have spoken were also greatly distressed. There were some that appeared to be glad; on the other hand, when I heard the fatal news I felt as if it concerned my own Congregation. I have been at least consoled to hear from your Reverence of the great constancy exhibited by those that are not professed; this is a sign that the spirit of God reigns in the Society.

I am, however, in hopes that the Lord is to derive from

[1] Father Pasquale de Matteis, born in the city of Lecce, April 4, 1705, entered the Society of Jesus, May 18, 1720, and always lived in it with much fervor of spirit. As he was always held in great esteem on account of his learning and virtues, the most honorable offices were intrusted to him. He was professor of rhetoric, of philosophy, of Greek, of Moral Theology, Rector of Massimo College for fourteen years, Provincial, and finally, Superior of the house at Naples. He also published some ascetical works which were highly prized. The famous Minister Bernardo Tanucci made him some flattering promises to induce him to leave the Society, but he refused every offer and took with his companions the road into exile. He died a holy death at Rome, February 20, 1779.

[2] In the month of September of this year the Jesuits had been expelled from Portugal, through the machinations of the execrable Marquis of Pombal.

this storm something great that will redound to his glory and to the welfare of the Society. I know, moreover, that the Pope and many Cardinals who are around the Pope are greatly in favor of the Society.

I send you two copies of my little book about forbidden books;[1] one of them you may keep, and the other you may put on the shelf of your library.

I am now engaged in a larger work which is divided into three parts, in which I treat at length of the exercises and instructions for priests.[2] It is a work that has cost me much labor.

Next Lent I am to go to Naples to give the exercises to two Congregations, and then I shall kiss your hand and speak to you about many things. In the mean time, recmend me in your holy Mass, and believe me, dear Father,

Your very humble and devoted servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

1 The work entitled: "Dissertatio de justa prohibitione et abolitione librorum nocuæ lectionis."

2 This work was published in 1760 under the title: "Selva di materie predicabili et istruttive per dar gli esercizî ai preti, ed anche per uso di lezione privata a proprio profitto." (Selva, or Collection of Material for Sermons and Instructions for Ecclesiastical Retreats, and also for Private Spiritual Reading.)

LETTER 329.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, at Iliceto.

He consents to the profession of several novices.—Various counsels.

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

PAGANI, December 6, [1759.]

Yes, Fratres Palumbo, Santorelli, and Mazzarelli [1] may make their vows.

The young man from Bosco should be sent to Caposele to see whether the climate will afford him some relief.

The doctor's brother gives very bad example; let him know that he will be sent away.

As for Father [Mauro] Murante, *fiat voluntas tua!* [May thy will be done!] See whether it is necessary that he should have a change of climate, I feel sorry for you on account of the expense, but I console myself that the Rule and Constitutions are pushed forward.

I bless your Reverence and all.

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 330.

To the Same.

He announces the arrival of two novices.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, December 9, 1759.

The priest, Canon of Montecorvino [D. Bartolomeo Corrado] will come.

[1] D. Raffaelle Palumbo, D. Constantino Santorelli and D. Epifanio Mazzarelli made afterwards their profession, December 25, into the hands of their Master, Father Tannoia.

I had refused him admission on account of his want of constancy; then, finally, after many petitions and lamentations on his part, I admitted him, but on condition that in regard to him there would be question of a novitiate of two or three years, and as long as I should think fit.

I write this that you may be informed of the matter. Besides, he has been here about two months, and has behaved very well.

After he has passed one year with you, let me know how he is getting on, and then we shall see what is to be done, but not before a whole year has elapsed.

Don Angelo Antonio [Grazioli] will also come. He made application to me to be received. I told him, and told him again many times, that he was welcome to remain in the novitiate or in another house, to come to the mission whenever he finished his studies; to remain as a guest, to make even the vow of perseverance and of poverty to his confessor; but to be received as a Father with the vows of the Congregation, he should not think of such a thing.—Now this is for your own information.

See that at the beginning of Lent, that is on Thursday or Friday after Ash-Wednesday, Father Strina comes here for certain exercises that have to be given to the nuns of Nocera. Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 331.

To Father Mauro Murante, at Iliceto.

He forbids him to go to his family to be cured, and deplores his want of fervor.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, December 14, 1759.

My dear Don Mauro: I answer briefly your long letter, which has been a source of very great sorrow to me, because I read therein not so much about the infirmity of your body as about the infirmity of your soul by wishing a change of climate, and thereby living outside of our houses.

I also received a letter from your mother. She tells me to send you to Melfi. I answered her that this would not be possible, and that she should not urge the matter as I would never be turned away from the resolution taken in regard to our subjects, namely, that the sick should not remain outside of our houses.

In consequence of the disorders that have arisen from granting a permission such as you ask, I have taken a resolution from which no one will be able to dissuade me.

In the mean time, I am greatly afflicted because the desire of becoming well has made you lose your fervor,[1] so that if you were to die now, you would not die as a saint, as I had hoped.

I ordered you to Iliceto because I saw that you were anxious to go there; besides, I had already been thinking that the air of this place was doing you no good. Here, by means of the baths, you have improved a little, and I hoped that afterwards you would continue to improve,

[1] In fact, Father Murante had so much lost the spirit of fervor that after one month he lost his vocation; but soon afterwards he felt so bitter remorse that it caused his death.

since your disease needs a long time in order to be cured.

It is true, you end your letter by submitting yourself entirely to my will; but I see that you write in this manner only by way of ceremony, because you have clearly made known to me your wish. May God bless you, because I do not dare to bless you. Live Jesus and Mary!

I may well suppose that you had an understanding with your mother in regard to the letter that she wrote to me. May God forgive you! To tell the truth, I was amazed.

Believe me, your Reverence,

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of the Redemptorist Fathers in our house of S. Maria Maddalena in Brussels, Belgium.

LETTER 332.

To Frater Andrea Morza. [1]

He refuses to grant him certain dispensations.

[End of the year 1759.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

My dear Frater: In these things commanded by the Rule I cannot give a dispensation.

[1] Andrea Morza was born at Caposele, September 17, 1739, and made his profession, April 20, 1758. His life was short but holy. He had a great desire to go among the heathen, as we see from the following letter written to St. Alphonsus, September 6, 1758: "My dear Father: The Lord in his goodness has deigned to enkindle in my heart the desire of laying down my life for him; and not a day passes that I do not wander with my thoughts among the barbarous nations, imagining that I am in the midst of them, bound with chains, shedding my blood for my Jesus. I am in great hopes that this moment so happy for me will come. The Lord knows how diligently I study; but I do so only for this end, and many times a day I renew the vow that I have made. — My dear Father, I beg

If every student wished to have his own particular confessor, the Rule would be overthrown. If I gave you a dispensation I would not be able to refuse it to others.

Let us do this: Ask counsel of Father Leo; but then continue to go to confession to the Prefect.

Live Jesus and Mary, Joseph and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 333.

To the Same.

Encouragement to fervor.

[End of the year 1759.]

Live Jesus and Mary!

I have read your letter, and I say to you be cheerful. Perform the usual exercises, and it does not matter whether you perform them with tediousness and pain. It is sufficient that you perform them, practising them as they come, such as the exercises of Communions, etc., and do not be afraid. *By means of the snow in winter grain becomes more productive.*

you for the love of Jesus and Mary to grant me permission not to eat flesh-meat during the novenas of the Blessed Virgin, of St. Teresa, and of the Blessed Sacrament. I conclude by kissing your feet and asking your blessing. — Your most unworthy son, Andrea Morza of the Most Holy Redeemer."

As he could not set out for the missions among the heathen, Andrea Morza, just ordained priest, asked to go on the missions in Sicily. His request was granted; but after eight months he was taken ill with consumption and was obliged to return home where he died, August 5, 1764. We have many of his letters addressed to his director, Father de Leo; they justify his high reputation for sanctity.

Do not give up the desire of becoming a saint, make progress, and recommend me to Jesus and Mary. I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 334.

To Mgr. Isidoro Sanchez de Luna, Archbishop of Salerno.

He asks him for faculties for reserved cases.

[January 22, 1760.]

Most Reverend and Dear Sir: Father D. Alfonso de Liguori of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer suppliantly exposes to your Grace that it frequently occurs both in regard to seculars as well as ecclesiastics in the spiritual exercises that are given several times a year in our house at Ciorani, in your diocese, that the Fathers of his Congregation hear the confessions of penitents guilty of sins to which is attached a censure in accordance with the reservation made by your Grace. He therefore begs you to deign to grant the faculty of absolving such sins in the manner and form as shall be pleasing to your Grace.

Moreover, as it is frequently necessary on the occasion of the aforesaid holy exercises to call for Fathers living in other houses to assist in hearing the confessions of those in retreat, he asks your Grace to grant to them the faculties to hear confessions and to absolve from the reserved cases, in the same manner that they have been granted to those Fathers that have received the *list of faculties* from your Grace.

To this petition the archbishop gave the following answer:

Having noted what has been exposed to us, we willingly grant to the Most Reverend Alfonso de Liguori, Rector Major of the Venerable Congregation of the Most Holy

Redeemer, all power (revocable at our will) to absolve cases that are reserved to us with or without censure.

As for the Reverend Fathers, religious of the house at Ciorani, in our diocese, and approved by us to hear the confessions of persons of both sexes, we grant them the same powers, except however the following cases: *the fourth, the sixth, the tenth, and the twelfth with censure.*

The same rule applies to the Father confessors of other houses of the said Congregation approved by their Ordinaries: we grant them the faculty of absolving from the same cases, and moreover that of hearing the confessions of persons of both sexes in our diocese. All being revocable at our will.

SALERNO, in our archiepiscopal palace, January 22, 1760.

ISIDORO, Archbishop of Salerno.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 335.

To a Nun.

What one must do in order to love God.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, January 27, 1760.

I have just received your letter with the letter of Sister Mariangiola and of Sister Maria Ventura. Without asking me any particular question you all three ask me what you must do in order to love God.

As I am very busy and have hardly time to breathe, I answer all three of you briefly, and in a general way. To love God with one's whole heart one must do two things: first, one must empty one's heart; then, one must fill it.

The heart is emptied by detachment from the goods of this world, from relatives, from the parlor, and from every sensible satisfaction. The heart is filled by means

of meditation, of Communions, and above all of prayer. Let us pray without ceasing: he that prays, will receive.

I recommend to you obedience to your director. Try also to receive Communion as often as possible: every day, if your director allows you; but it is not necessary to confess every day.

Recommend me to Jesus Christ; I will on my part pray to him for you. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Believe me, dear Sister,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 336.

To Father Antonio Tannoia.

Zeal of the saint for the practice of obedience.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, February 22, 1760.

I thought that your Reverence had not carefully read the letter in which I told you that Frater Pompilio should remain there, because the air of this place is injurious to him; meanwhile you have sent him in haste to us. But if your Reverence did not read the letter, then Brother Domenico deserves a severe penance, for he knew it was my express wish that the Frater should remain there. When he saw the Frater departing, he should have informed us. Be that as it may, the orders of the Superiors are to be obeyed *without seeking or knowing the reason why.*

To tell the truth, when I saw him coming against my express command, I was beside myself, and said that you had not perhaps read my letter. But it displeased me very much to hear that you had read it, had understood, and

still had done the contrary, perhaps with the approval of others.

Let him [Frater Pompilio] return immediately and as some atonement [your Reverence] will pay the expenses of the journey. I give you all my blessing.

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] Send me without delay a list of your subjects.

Live Jesus and Mary! I wish your Reverence to give me a plain detailed account of Frater Pompilio's departure, and to tell me which Fathers counselled you to send him against my orders.

If we cast obedience to the winds, it is all over with us. Live Jesus and Mary!

After a copy.

LETTER 337.

To the Same.

He reassures him on the subject of the preceding letter.

Live Jesus and Mary!

NAPLES,[1] March 4, 1760.

I have already told you that I could not believe you had read the letter, and had then acted contrary to my orders. Frater Pompilio's assertion frightened me. Now I am calm again.

With regard to changing his place of abode, I beg you to remind me of the matter when I return to Nocera, as I am not in a condition to settle such things now.

Recommend me to Jesus Christ, for here [at Naples]

[1] This letter was written from Naples, because the saint was at that time giving the exercises of which he had spoken in his letter of December 3, the preceding year.

as well as at Minervino, I have my hands full of trouble.

I bless your Reverence and all.

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of the house at Pagani.

LETTER 338.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Caposele.

He asks him to obtain information about two postulants.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, April 2, 1760.

I answer your letter in reference to the two priests. In regard to receiving them I have my doubts, since they are over thirty years of age, and as your Reverence writes, they understand only the Latin language, so that they would have to begin anew their studies for the purpose of hearing confessions and of preaching.

However, seeing the manner in which they write, which appears to me quite refined, knowing them to be gentlemen, and having heard of the mode in which they obtained their vocation, I will not refuse them admission. Still, I say this to your Reverence, privately, that I should like to have it made clear that in their native place they have not given scandal. Hence if your Reverence becomes sure of this, I will receive them, and they may be sent to Iliceto to begin their novitiate.

If however you are not certain that they did not lead a scandalous life, I beg you to write to the city to a faithful friend or to the Vicar-General Giannini, so that he may secretly give you notice of the conduct of said priests, begging him moreover to inform you in a prudent way

whether he has not heard anything. I say this, because without knowing it we might get ourselves into some predicament.

Finally, I intrust this case to your prudence so that you may not receive into the Congregation any one who has led a scandalous life. See that they bring with them to the novitiate twenty-five ducats, at least let them bring with them what they can give.[1]

I bless all. Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 339.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce, in the Monastery at Camigliano.

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin a guarantee of a good death.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, April 30, 1760.

Sometimes I answer you, and my answer does not reach you.

As for that religious, tell her in my name not to be uneasy. Certainly it was God who wished to have it so. Had she entered she might have been a cause of temptation to her brother; besides, how could her entrance have prevented death from taking place?

After all, why does she fear for her brother, who was a good priest, and who died while invoking the Blessed

[1] An examination of the general catalogue of the Congregation shows that these two priests were not admitted.

Virgin! He that dies while invoking the Mother of God cannot be lost.

As to yourself, continue to practise obedience by bearing up under adversities, and be not uneasy. Furthermore, as long as we live we cannot be entirely without fear.

Always recommend me to Jesus Christ; this is what I also do for you. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 340.

To Father Giuseppe Melchionna,[1] at Iliceto.

The saint reproves him very gently for his indiscreet request.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, April 30, 1760.

Yes, my dear Father, tell Father Rector [Don Antonio Tannoia] from me that he should send you hither, to Nocera as quickly as possible.

1 Father Giuseppe Melchionna, a nephew of Father Girolamo Ferrara, was born at Teora in the archdiocese of Conza; he made his religious profession March 3, 1753, and died in our house at Nocera de' Pagani in the year 1803. Father Tannoia in his "Life of St. Alphonsus" book ii. chap. lxii. speaking of Father Melchionna's charity and of the temptations against his vocation, cites this letter with the following reflections: "St. Alphonsus entertained so high an idea of our holy vocation that it caused him inexpressible anguish when he perceived any one tempted to turn his back upon the Congregation. At such times he endeavored to discover whether it was merely a temptation or whether it was the diabolical obstinacy of the will. If he saw it was only a temptation, he sympathized with the subject and assisted him by his prayers; he

When St. Anthony begged St. Paul the Hermit to open the door, saying that he would otherwise die outside, the latter answered, as he opened the door: That is a very fine way of asking with a threat. I must say the same to you. I sympathize with your condition. Are you dreaming? Who said that you were sent to Iliceto as a punishment?

How could the Brothers have blamed you, since all Iliceto knows about that affair of Brother Domenico?

You say: *otherwise I will ask for a dispensation!* — You will ask for it, but who will give it to you? *O Master Giorgio*, why lose so much time? Do not trouble yourself about the temptations; they are not sins. Have recourse to our Lady, and fear not.

Rest assured I shall not send your letter to Father Ferrara. But for charity's sake, do not show such anger again. If I did not know you well, I would give you a good whipping. Now, come quickly; I am waiting for you.

Let me tell you that subjects are changed from house to house, not only on account of their faults, but for any reason whatsoever. *Are we then monks properly so-called?* I answer: I pity you for it is not you who speak, it is your imagination. However, tell your imagination to speak with a little more discretion the next time.

I bless you. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

even excused certain impertinences. A young Father, who thought he had been sent to Iliceto as a punishment wrote an impertinent letter to St. Alphonsus, asking either to be removed from Iliceto, or to be dispensed from his vows. St. Alphonsus who saw the temptation, replied in a jocular tone: 'When St. Anthony, etc.'" Tannoia then adds: "With mildness, tempered, however, with a little severity St. Alphonsus dissipated the temptation and gave peace to the afflicted subject."

LETTER 341.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Caposele.

Various counsels.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, May 2, 1760.

Know that I have forbidden Father N. to hear confessions on account of his strange notions.

I am troubled about Father X. at present; for, if I mistake not, Father A. told me that the former entertains some very extravagant ideas. If you should notice this, forbid him to hear confessions, and send him to me that I may get rid of my scruple.

When Father Apice returns from the missions, please send him to me; I need him for a very urgent affair; do not forget.

In future, do not take any Brothers [postulants] on trial in your house without my permission, for after they have been there for some time, we dislike to send them away; and so they live on us.[1]

Father Leo wrote to me about the young man from Tito.[2] When the Father returns, send for the young man and examine him thoroughly.

I bless you all. Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] The saint speaks of those postulants whose vocation was still doubtful.

[2] Tito, a place in the diocese of Potenza.

LETTER 342.

To a Father on the Mission.

He gives him an order.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, May 12, 1760.

Having finished the second spiritual exercises, you will please go to the house of S. Michele; and I bless you. Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Same source.

LETTER 343.

To Father Celestino de Robertis.

He names him Superior of a mission. — Various counsels.

[About May 16, 1760.]

Live Jesus and Mary!

I have destined you to be the Superior at the mission at Sava, and you are to preach the evening sermon.

I learn that at Giffoni more than one disagreement has taken place; but I know not between whom or on what account. I should be glad if you would send me particulars.

At present I recommend to you regular observance, but especially kindness to all. If there should be *any one that is stubborn* it will be sufficient to let me know this after the mission.

The sermon should not last longer than an hour and a quarter, or sometimes at the most an hour and a half.

I bless your Reverence and all the others. Live Jesus and Mary!

As for the expense that you will incur, ask help of Ciorani. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 344.

To Father Emanuele Caldarera, of the Congregation of the Oratory.

He declares his opinion about a foundation in Sicily.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, June 30, 1760.

Very Reverend and Dear Father: I have received your second most esteemed favor, and I feel grateful to you for it. But my dear Father, how could I wish to send subjects to that place when the Archbishop [of Palermo] has declared that he does not want us? — We must wait and procure, first of all, the consent of the archbishop. See whether there is any one there who could obtain it from him; but I already see that it will be difficult, since he is not popular with the Sicilians.[1]

Signor Bonano, the bailiff, insists strongly that it will be first necessary to have a *representation* emanating from deputies of the kingdom.

What makes me afraid is that the Fathers of the Mission after having been called to Sicily by the bishop with so many pressing solicitations, should afterwards have to leave it.

Before, therefore, sending the Fathers I do not wish a certainty but at least some solid probability, that they will not have to return home, to our great shame; the more so, since the expenses of the journey are great, and the income of that place is at present small. I am not opposed to the

1 Mgr. Marcello Papiniano Cusano was not beloved at Palermo, because, he was not originally from Sicily, but a Neapolitan, from Frasso, in the diocese of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

matter, but I should prefer to have some security for the future.

I therefore inform you that just this week I received a letter from Mgr. [Andrea Lucchesi] of Girgenti in which he tells me first that he cannot send me the alms, in accordance with my request because his treasury is exhausted.

There is no doubt some mistake, some one having asked for alms in my name; since I have never dreamed of asking for such a thing.[1]

Monsignor also writes to me that he has established a revenue of one hundred and fifty ounces,[2] that he hopes soon to increase this amount to two hundred, that he wishes to have a *house of missionaries for spiritual exercises and missions*, near his palace, and that he desires our Congregation to be established there.

I have answered him that I was ready to send him subjects, but I begged him to have, if possible, the house outside of inhabited places, according to the poverty of our

[1] This mistake or rather this swindle is thus related by Father Tannoia in the Life of the saint: "A Neapolitan gentleman taking advantage of the veneration in which the name of Alphonsus was generally held, wrote in his name to different dioceses requesting pecuniary assistance for the benefit of the works of piety in which he was engaged. On account of the high esteem in which Alphonsus was held large sums were obtained. Although this man was anxious to take his letters from the post-office, it providentially happened that our Brother Francesco Tartaglione, who was at Naples transacting business, succeeded in being ahead of him. Alphonsus opened a letter at Pagani and discovered to his amazement that Mgr. Lucchesi had instructed his agent to send him (Alphonsus) twenty ducats. Alphonsus thanked the prelate for his courteous exhibition of kindness and informed him at the same time that not he but some swindler had made such a request in his name. Monsignor answered him more courteously and requested him to receive the money, and use it as he thought best."

[2] The Sicilian ounce is equal to 12.75 frs.

Institute, with cells of twelve palms and corridors of eight. I know not whether this affair will be successful, because the bishop is old, and he moves slowly.

Please inform me whether you know anything, and give me some instruction about this matter, and recommend me above all to Jesus Christ.

I am glad that the affair has been deferred to some other time. Who knows, perhaps matters may turn out better in the mean time.

Kissing your hand, I remain,

Your very humble and very devoted servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 345.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, Rector of the House at Iliceto.

Recommendations relative to various subjects and to studies in particular.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, July 18, 1760.

I have received Father Ferrara's letter.

Yes, my dear Father, let Father Polestra be sent to Caposele and then Frater [Don Amato] Ricca can stay a little longer. It displeases me also to send him. But please try to find out whether his father has the means of supporting him, for he has the dowry of his wife and the aid of his brother who promises to assist him; for this reason it would perhaps be well for Frater Ricca to write to his uncle.

Mgr. [Bernardo Onorati, Bishop] of Trevico writes to me and begs me to send Father Melchionna to the renewal at S. Nicola; but as I had already thought of sending him to another house, I am asking the Monsignor to excuse me

if I send another Father. See, however, whether you can send two subjects to the places where missions have already been given.

Father [Celestino] de Robertis will probably go there to make himself a true Carthusian, as Father Villani and others say that it is not becoming for him to stay at Caposele where he has been so long a time and where he has had a large number of penitents. Let Father Ferrara tell you of the formal obedience which I gave to Father Celestino and of which I should like to hear something.

I bless you all.

I advise Father [Don Giovanni] Rizzi to exercise the students in arguing and in sustaining theses, and on the question of *grace* to adopt the system laid down in my little book *on prayer;*[1] let him read carefully to them the third and the last chapter of the *second part*, and let him compose theses on this point.

If he wishes to have a number of copies for this purpose I will send them; but I believe there are already some copies there. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

[1] This work entitled: "The Great Means of Prayer to acquire Eternal Salvation and all the Graces that one Desires," published in the preceding year, 1759.

LETTER 346.

To Father Pasquale de Matteis, of the Society of Jesus at Naples.

Sentiments of the saint on account of the persecutions of the Society of Jesus.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, August 17, 1760.

Very Reverend and Dear Father: I am exceedingly thankful to you for the beautiful work of Father Natale.

I have still heard more bad news about Portugal. Poor kingdom! I pity it.

During the coming October I shall pay my respects to you at Naples. In the mean time I do not omit to dispute with those that are anxious to accept as true all that is said against the Jesuits. I at least say that even tyrants do not neglect to interrogate the guilty before condemning them; only the Jesuits are condemned without being heard.

I however console myself by saying that there is a God who will one day manifest the truth.

I recommend myself to your prayers; may we meet again in October. On the morning that I arrive you must know that I shall arrive with the thought of dining with you whether you wish me to do so or not. Live Jesus and Mary!

Believe me, dear Father,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 347.

To the Most Reverend Father Lorenzo Ricci, General of the Society of Jesus.

He asks him to have some one to refute the calumnies spread against the Society of Jesus.

[The year 1760?]

Although I have not the good fortune of belonging to the Society, yet I love it as if I belonged to it; seeing it, therefore, so much accused by what Father Norbert [1] relates in his book, which has been condemned. I have begged your subjects, especially those at the college at Naples, to make a reply so as to be able to refute the learned men of the present day, to whom it appears impossible to obtain the diploma of doctorship without speaking ill of the Jesuits.

Your Paternity must excuse me for saying so much. Your Society has been placed by God in his Church for the general welfare of Christianity; and we see the good that it has accomplished the past two centuries, and does still accomplish in the whole world through the labors of its members. Apostolic laborers need a good name, must have a good reputation. Now this good name the enemies are striving to take away by pointing to Father Norbert's book, which is to be found everywhere, and in which as your Paternity knows are related horrible facts. Now as no reply is given to disprove these facts, there exists this

[1] The unfortunate Father Norbert, a Capuchin, called later on Abate Platel, had written principally against the Jesuits the work "Mémoires historiques sur les Missions des Indes orientales" (Historical Memoirs on the Missions of the East Indies 1744, 2 vols.) — and "Mémoires historiques apologétiques" (Historical Apologetic Memoirs) presented in 1751 to the Sovereign Pontiff Benedict XIV. — The first work was condemned by the Congregation of the Index in 1745; the other in 1751.

dilemma: if the facts are not true; why do not the Jesuits answer, and bring out the truth in a clear light? or if the facts are true, why do not the Superiors punish and condemn the evil-doers rather than defend them?

Other horrible imputations are added to the events that are said to have happened in Malabar and China; I feel like dying when I hear of such things.

Hence, for the honor of the Society and for the glory of God, I feel myself urged to send you this request in which I beg you to write to all those places to which it is necessary to write, and to give orders that those things should be explained so that the Society may be cleared of these charges. Such efforts and such diligence on the part of the Society appear to me to be necessary. I hear that in France there exists a publication that was written against Father Norbert. Your Paternity should at least send for it, and have it printed either at Rome or at Naples.

Pardon me, I again beg you, for having written these things. I repeat: the affection that I bear towards the Society urges me to write to you. Though I am good for nothing, you may know that I am still the publisher of the praises of the Society.

Quoted by Father Celestino Berruti in his work entitled: "Lo Spirito di S. Alfonso M. de Liguori" (Spirit of St. Alphonsus M. de Liguori, chap. xxvii. Naples 1873.)

LETTER 348.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

Recommendations regarding certain members of the Institute and various apostolic labors.

[November 1760.]

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

Father Corrado who is troubled with his stomach [1] is going to your place. Let him go on all the missions which are given there; let him preach, give the instructions, etc. as the time has not yet come for him to hear confessions. The travelling and the attendant excitement may restore him to health; otherwise he is lost.

Father [Alessandro de] Meo has written to me that according to the opinion of medical authorities the air of Iliceto will hasten his death, as he is in very poor health. Whereupon I wrote to him to come to Pagani. Meanwhile let Father [Francesco de] Leo continue to teach theology; as for the missions, it will be impossible to send out two bands of missionaries, since we stand greatly in need of more subjects. Let your Reverence act as seems best to you.

Please let me know whether [Don Francesco Antonio] de Paolo has had two attacks of the gout, as Father de Meo wrote me. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Do not forget to send the two subjects to Minervino, as I wrote to you some time ago, namely, Father Picone and another Father to give the exercises to the priests.

The Bishop [Mgr. Stefano Gennaro Spani] answered me and said that he is anxiously awaiting the Fathers. They must go before Christmas. If you could send three, I should feel highly pleased. It would be well if they could

[1] Father Bartolomeo Corrado had made his vows, November 12 this year.

start during the novena of the Conception; if at all possible, let them start before that time, though according to the letter of the bishop he would like to have the exercises during the novena of Christmas. But I think it better to give them before that time, for during the novena the poor people are overburdened with work. I do not know exactly what to say; let your Reverence act as you see fit.

It would be good before setting out to send notice and to ask for horses; they will be given with the greatest pleasure. I bless all.

Father Blasucci has insisted several times that we should admit to religious profession Don Pasquale Giuliano, the doctor who studied at Ciorani and who is now a novice; he tells me that the latter has behaved very well all this time. Your Reverence will send your vote.[1]

I received your letter concerning the accusation of three gentlemen of Acerenza. I am of your opinion; it is necessary to acquaint the Vicar-General Ganini with everything.

As for that mission, I wrote to Father Margotta that he should go to the Archbishop of Matera [Mgr. Serafino Filangeri] to tell him that I place the matter entirely in his hands; your Reverence will please act according to the answer of the archbishop which Father Margotta will send to you.

[1] It seems that Father Caione and the other Consultors gave a favorable vote; for we read the following notice in the general catalogue of the Congregation: "On the 25th of March, 1761, Don Pasquale Giuliano a cleric and doctor of medicine, a native of Moncianisi, in the diocese of Capua, aged thirty years, three months and seventeen days, was admitted to the novitiate. He made his religious profession, August 15, of the same year in the presence of Father Giovanni Rizzi; the time which he spent at Ciorani teaching the humanities (one year and eight months), was reckoned as a part of his novitiate." After many years of zealous apostolic labor, he passed away to his reward in our house at Girgenti, in Sicily.

Pay no attention to the accusation. Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 349.

To Father Pasquale de Matteis, of the Society of Jesus.

Zeal of the saint in defence of the persecuted Society.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, November 21, 1760.

My dear Father: I send you those lax opinions which Father Concina [1] holds. If they are not lax they do not at least appear to me to be sufficiently probable.

I have begun to read those books published at Venice in defence of the Jesuits, and I have given them to others to read and even to those that dislike the Jesuits; and all are astonished at the insolence of the author of the *Reflections*. Especially does Mgr. Borgia [Bishop of Cava] praise these books most highly.

During Lent I shall be with you to kiss your hand. In the mean time recommend me in your holy Mass. I remain,

Your very humble and very devoted servant,
ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] I shall have as many as possible to read those books, and I am also making a synopsis of the most remarkable things that they contain. Live Jesus and Mary!

[1] There is here question of some particular propositions; it being known that Father Daniele Concina was a very rigid author.

LETTER 350.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, at Iliceto.

He speaks to him of an important affair.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, December 12, 1760.

I have received the answer of the Duke of Andria [1] in which he says that he has this foundation very much at heart; in fact he would be ready to give all, even his own blood, to bring it about. Hence you can write to Corato.

I have already written to him that we cannot come forward in this matter even if an income of four hundred ducats a year is assured. It is the archbishop [2] and the commune that must make the first offer by asking not only for a foundation, but also they should see to it that the Fathers have a house to live in by giving them the superflous revenues of a chapel and of other special funds. Enough for the present; I shall send you a sketch of the memorial which is to be presented by the archbishop and by the commune.

It is not true that I said I was thinking of the royal approbation. I said that if the question about the revenues were settled, I should know how to obtain this approbation.

It grieved me very much to hear that the house [at Iliceto] is in danger of falling, owing to the awkwardness

[1] Don Ettore Carafa. — The project of which there is question here was that of a foundation at Corato.

[2] The Archbishop of Trani in whose diocese was situated the city of Corato.

in taking away one of the foundation walls. *Fiat voluntas tua!* [Thy will be done!]

I bless you all. Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 351.

To Sister Maria Arcangela Lippo [1] in the Monastery of the SS. Rosario at Monticchino, Diocese of Massalubrense.

He complies with one of her wishes, but reproves her for insisting.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, December 22, 1760.

So, then, if Father Apice should die, would there be no more hope for your salvation?

Father Antonio and Father Chiesa [2] have spoken to me of your desire, but it has not been possible for me to satisfy you; for Father Apice is at Gaeta whither the President of the Council has sent him. He there devotes all his care to the conservatory which you know shelters three hundred persons, [3] if I mistake not; and he cannot absent himself. I have tried to recall him, but have not succeeded.

But, O my God! you have at your disposition, quite

[1] In the Life of Father Apice mention is made of this religious as of a very holy person. Some of the letters addressed to her by the celebrated missionary are quoted in this book.

[2] Father Chiesa belonged to the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine of the Congregation of S. Giovanni a Carbonara. He was a very learned man and a great friend of St. Alphonsus.

[3] Father Tannoia in his Life of St. Alphonsus (book ii. ch. xlvii.) narrates at length the reform of this asylum, which was undertaken and brought to a happy issue by the Fathers of our Congregation.

near you, so many confessors who can take away your scruples, and you are thinking only of Father Apice! If however the latter were not now at Gaeta, he would perhaps be at a mission at Conza, at a distance of several days' journey, and would then not be able to see you. It is the devil who in order to destroy you makes you so obstinate.

Yet I feel compassion for your soul and I send you from this place another of our subjects, Father Celestino de Robertis. He is a good Father and nowise inferior to Father Apice. Ask immediately the bishop for permission necessary for the Father to hear your confession, and at once tell the latter all your scruples.

This Father could be of great service to me at present; but for the good of your soul I make a sacrifice and send him to you. Profit by his presence, I entreat you, now while you have him; and if you do not wish to manifest your conscience to him after I have put myself to so great inconveniences to send him, you must no more ask me for Father Apice or any other Father of our Congregation; for I will not longer answer you.

Tell then all your troubles to this Father, and I beg you to get through with him as soon as possible, for he is needed here. And in future, never think of making this request either for him or for others. The journey to Massa is very inconvenient. I remain, etc. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

My companions are continually going about preaching in distant villages. If I should have to send them to remove the scruples of the religious in all the monasteries which they have had occasion to see, it would be a fine thing. Once that we have evangelized a place, we have no longer anything to do with it.

I say this in order that you may no more speak to me about Father Apice, whom it is utterly impossible for me

to call away from Gaeta. Would to God I could have him come to assist me. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Recommend to the Blessed Virgin,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original, in possession of the Carmelite nuns at Ferrara.

LETTER 352.

To the Bishops.

He forwards his little work entitled "The Mass and the Office that are Hurriedly Said."

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

December 27, 1760.

Right Reverend and Dear Sirs: Seeing the haste and the little account that the priests make of Jesus Christ in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, I have been urged by some good friend to publish the little work on the *Mass said in haste*.

I have endeavored to make the treatise short, so that priests may be more easily induced to read it.

Hence I take the liberty of sending to your Lordships a few copies, that you may deign to glance at them, and at the same time may give them to the priests, your subjects, to read, so that they may understand the attention and the reverence due to so holy an action, which at the present day is ordinarily thought too little of by those that perform it.

Finally, there has been added a brief treatise on the manner of saying the divine Office with devotion and fruit.

And herewith offering to you my humble services, and kissing your hand, I remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 353.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

Various commissions.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, 9, [January] 1761.

As Father Villani has not called you, it is a sign that you are not needed.

Father Meo wished to return immediately [to Caposele] to begin again his studies; but I have sent him on a mission. May God make Father Gallo a saint!

When you find it convenient, send me the money for the books.

With regard to the vineyard, I told Father Ferrara to write, in order that everything needful may be done.

I bless you all.

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of Signor Conte Azzolini at Rome.

LETTER 354.

To Sister Chiara Gaiano,[1] in the Monastery of Ravello.

He prescribes for her a rule of life.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, January 11, 1761.

It consoles me to hear that you are grateful to Jesus Christ for the grace that he has given to you, namely, the

1 Chiara Gaiano, niece of our Father Carlo Gaiano, was a native of Spiano, diocese of Salerno. St. Alphonsus had been her director

grace of vocation to the religious state. The Lord wishes that we should testify our gratitude for similar graces; for these are favors that he does not grant to every one.

I recommend to you prayer. When you have free time give it entirely to Jesus Christ; and when you are in aridity, use a book. Be on your guard; a time will come when you will experience disgust, darkness, and perhaps temptations, regretting to have come to this monastery. Heed not this temptation, and say then: *My Jesus, I have come to this place for Thee, and I wish to die here at Thy feet.*

Preserve this letter, and read it when the devil wishes to trouble you. I tell you this because I have not always time to answer; this is the reason why I write to you to-day at length, so that this letter may be of service to you in future.

Love therefore prayer; but when obedience imposes anything upon you, leave all and obey; by obedience you will give more pleasure to God.

Be also careful to accept cheerfully contempt and correction; offer them immediately to Jesus Christ, and make no reply.

If you commit a fault, make an act of love for God, and remain tranquil.

Flee from the parlor as you would from death. Always love to be either in the choir or in your cell, as long as obedience does not ordain otherwise; and in everything keep yourself united with the will of God, saying always: *My God, it is Thee only that I desire; I desire nothing more; and all that Thou wishest, I also wish.*

Always pray to Jesus Christ to give you his love, and ask without ceasing the same grace of Mary by saying

when she was in the world. Hence she wrote to him as soon as she made her profession in the monastery of the SSma Trinità at Ravello. The saint answered her by the present letter.

to her: *My Mother, help me that I may love Jesus Christ.*

Communicate often, and after Communion recommend me to Jesus Christ; do this out of charity, and also because I have seconded your vocation.[1]

Good-bye till we see each other in Paradise. I am, etc.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 355.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, at Iliceto.

He expresses astonishment at not having received certain news.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, January 22, 1761.

There was an opportunity of sending me the manuscript for the *Life* of Frater Blasucci and for that of Father Don Cesare,[2] by the man whom you sent to me; but I saw nothing, although I wrote to you several times; and again, you write me nothing about the new foundation at Corato, though I told you that the duke[3] was highly delighted

[1] In a letter addressed to Father Tannoia, dated June 8, 1792, the Sister thus expresses herself on this subject: "My mother having become blind, I wrote to Monsignor [St. Alphonsus] that he should recommend her in his prayers and asked him whether he could not beg God to cure her. He answered me, November 7, 1758, that such a thing was impossible. I was then staying with my family on account of the illness of my mother. But Monsignor in the letter which he wrote pressed me to enter the convent, saying that he did not wish me to lose my vocation on account of my mother. . . I obeyed, and a short time afterwards I entered as a religious the convent where I had spent a year as a pupil."

[2] From this it would seem that the saint intended to write the Life of Frater Domenico Blasucci and that of Father Sportelli.

[3] Ettore Carafa.

with the idea, and that he said he would even shed his blood for it.

What is the matter? Do you never take any letters from the post-office?

I am sending you six packages of the little books entitled *Messa strapazzata* [Mass hurriedly said] together with the letters [to bishops]. Your Reverence will please send them to the bishops as quickly as you find it convenient.

The two single copies are for you and your Community.

As for the foundation at Corato, they have to attend to it, for I cannot meddle with the affair.

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 356.

To Father Giovanni Rizzi. [1]

He approves of one of his decisions.

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

NOCERA, April 10, 1761.

You did well in getting Father Picone to remain to help Canon Maffei; Father Picone can in future ask the Canon

[1] Giovanni Rizzi was born August 22, 1713 of good and pious parents, at Zungoli in the diocese of Ariano. When he was a year old, death took his father from him. Having been confided to the care of an uncle, who was a Canon, he devoted himself to study. After completing his philosophical course, as he was gifted with a brilliant mind, he was sent to Rome, where after a few years he gained the doctor's degree. Having been ordained priest on his return home, he devoted himself for some time to the education of youth, when yielding to the request of Mgr. Giovanni Anzano, he went to the seminary of Campagna, where he taught first philosophy, with great applause, and then, theology; afterwards as Rector of the seminary, he worked for the good of the Institute with

to let him go out on missions occasionally, as it will benefit his health.

I thought that your Reverence had already had Mgr. di Sisteron's [1] book, but I find that it is still here. You did not remind me of it, and so it remained here; however I shall send it at the very first opportunity.

I bless you all. Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

a zeal proportioned to his great gifts and to his sanctity. In 1750 he entered our Congregation, and after a fervent novitiate of six months, he made his profession December 25, of the same year. His life was ever worthy of a son of the Congregation. He was a true model of regular observance and of missionary zeal. He showed wonderful skill in giving the spiritual exercises to priests and to gentlemen. His fame being spread abroad by these labors, bishops and the first cities of the kingdom vied with one another in endeavoring to secure this great preacher. After years of continual labor in the ministry, the servant of God, fell asleep in the Lord, January 6, 1771 at our house of S. Angelo a Cupolo, and God did not delay to manifest the sanctity of his servant by several miracles.

[2] The Bishop of Sisteron, Pietro Francesco Laffiteau wrote among other works: 1. "History of the Constitution *Unigenitus*;" 2. "Refutation of Anecdotes on the Constitution *Unigenitus*." He was a determined adversary of the Jansenists.

LETTER 357.

To D. Francesco Pansa, Archdeacon of the Cathedral of Amalfi at Rome.

He asks a favor of him.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, May 6, 1761.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: I have received your very kind answer about the works of Father de Leonardis, but your kindness makes me importunate.

I beg you to get for me the book or directory of the present year 1761, in which are given the names of all the Cardinals, bishops, officials, Congregations, etc. It bears the title "Notizie per l' anno."

Hoping that you will pardon me the liberty that I take, I remain,

Your very humble and very devoted servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of Mgr. Gaetano Ruggieri at Rome.

LETTER 358.

To a Friend.

He asks him to do a favor.

[The year 1761?]

Live Jesus and Mary!

My dear Don Urbano: Please order the coach for us on Tuesday morning, as I have asked you to do, and let it be at Corvara about seven o'clock.

Let me know by the bearer of this how much I am to

pay the coachman, drink-money included. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the original in possession of the priest Roberto Pepe at Pagani.

LETTER 359.

To the Bishops.

He sends them his *Letter to a religious on the manner of preaching.*

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

[NOCERA], May 10, 1761.

Right Reverend and Dear Sirs: The compassion that I feel for so many miserable, uneducated persons who go to hear sermons, but derive but little profit from them, because the preachers speak in a lofty and florid style, and scorn to lower themselves to break to them the bread of the divine Word according to their comprehension, has impelled me to publish the present letter, which I have the honor of sending to your Lordships.

I beg you to read the letter first, and then to have it read by the priests of your dioceses who are engaged in preaching, and also to send it to the convents of religious men, recommending it to the Superiors to have it read by those that usually preach.

I also request you to have it read by the preachers who come to preach the sermons of Lent and of Advent. It is true, these already come with their sermons prepared, but who knows whether they may not correct themselves in future, thinking of the great account that has to be given to God by those who do not make themselves understood by the poor people?

For this end I send you several copies. And if you need more, you will oblige me if you write to Nocera,

whence they will be sent to you immediately; for I had them printed for the purpose of distributing them.

Renewing my obligations to you, I recommend myself to your prayers. Humbly kissing your hands, I remain, etc. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 360.

To a Priest of Bisaquino. [1]

He recommends to him to practise filial piety under very difficult circumstances.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, May 19, 1761.

Reverend and Dear Sir: I have heard of your reasonable anxieties, and I feel sorry for you; but from afar counsels cannot be given to you: what can be given are general rules, because there are always circumstances that change cases. Therefore, to give you my opinion as I know it to be before God, I hold that in the case that you point out, you should by no means neglect to assist your father, who, the more troublesome he is, the greater will be the merit of your charity and filial piety.

We know by faith that God has commanded that our parents should be honored; no exception, whether they are good or bad; and we read in the Lives of so many saints having either heretical or infidel parents, to whom they were however most respectful and gave them temporal support.

Your Reverence should, therefore, do the will of God who *ab æterno* [from eternity] has destined you to be the son of such a father and who he knew had such a disposition.

St. Charles made a beautiful answer, quite worthy of him-

[1] Bisaquino forms part of the archdiocese of Monreale (Sicily.)

self, to one who was trying to dissuade him from using so much tolerance towards certain perverse people who, the more good that was done them, the worse they became. He said that *the mercy of God is occupied with those that are miserable, but who is more miserable than the one who knows not his misery?*

This remark I suggest to your Reverence. You already know that your father is reduced to such a state that he hardly distinguishes good from evil; you should therefore always assist him charitably and patiently so that you may either have more merit before God or that you may see that perhaps by your virtue you may overcome his obstinacy, thereby imitating the angel guardians who do not leave souls, although they see that they do not profit by their inspirations.

Be strong and full of courage; I remain,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] Live Jesus and Mary! In case, however, your father needs not your temporal assistance, and in case that he hinders you from God's service and from duly attending to the duties of the priesthood, you could leave him; yet you would be obliged to examine many other circumstances. Live Jesus and Mary!

After a copy.

LETTER 361.

To Father Giovanni Rizzi, at Iliceto.

He asks him to aid a Father in his studies.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, May 21, 1761.

You did well to send Father Melaccio. When the matter admits of no delay, do not wait for my permission.

It displeases me very much to hear that the Rector [Father Tannoia] kept at home not only Father Picone, who had to remain on account of Canon Maffei, but also Father Michele. He has thus been the cause why an important mission has been a miserable failure. Yet the Rector has been asked in a special manner for this mission by Father Michele.

At the time of missions, it suffices if the Rector and one or at the most, two Fathers, remain at home; but when there is a necessity, one Father will suffice.

I am sending the little chains to the novices, and I give them a special blessing that God may make them saints, and that they may recommend me to Jesus Christ.

I am also sending five bundles of cord; it is all we have at present; I shall order some from Naples.

Father Corrado is going to your house, as the air here has not proved beneficial. I ask your Reverence to help him in the conferences on Moral Theology in some treatises which he has yet to study, especially, *de Pœnitentia*, *de Matrimonio* and *de Censuris*, and parts of *de Contractibus*. He is an able young man, but he has not gone through a course of Moral Theology. I beg your Reverence to do him this favor.

I bless you. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 362.

To His Brother D. Ercole de Liguori, at Naples.

He asks him for the payment of the interest on his life-annuity.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, May 24, 1761.

My dear Don Ercole: Have patience, because now as Brother Francesco writes, there are three payments due, which amount to sixty-seven ducats, and he says that he has received no more than seventeen ducats: at one time thirteen; and at another four; according to what he keeps marked down in his books there are fifty ducats still due.

God knows in what straits we are. We have to buy grain, and we know not how to do so. Hence I wish to have the interest of my life-annuity, for I cannot bear the idea of seeing these maturities accumulating, as they have done.

Have patience with me; try to settle our account, because I am in need.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Brother ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in our house at Bishop-Eton, diocese of Liverpool, England.

LETTER 363.

To Sister Chiara Gaiano, in the Monastery of the SSma Trinità at Ravello.

Rules of conduct amidst trials.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, May 28, 1761.

Don Carlo,[1] your uncle, has gone to Naples. He asked my permission to go to see you; but I refused him, because it is forbidden by our Rule to visit relatives without necessity, and because this necessity does not exist in this case. You could not confess to your uncle; as for other things you may write to him. This is what I have told him and what I am also telling you.

In regard to the trials that you experience in the convent, I am more pleased than if you performed miracles and had ecstasies. *Persecutions closely attach us to Jesus Christ, and help us to love God only.*

Take care not to complain about them to any one, whoever he may be; and when you feel them, offer them to Jesus Christ without defending yourself.

If sometimes it happens that you are uneasy, do not then trouble yourself, for having been troubled; humble yourself, make an act of love for God, and recover your spirits. Pray every day to Jesus Christ to permit that you be despised as he himself has been for the love of you. What will the entrance into the convent help you, if you do not know how to suffer to be despised for the love of Jesus Christ?

This is the very great advantage that you have in being in the convent.

Devote yourself to bearing all for Jesus Christ, and

[1] Don Carlo Gaiano was a great missionary of our Congregation.

recommend me in holy Communion. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 364.

To Father Giovanni Rizzi.

He combats his scruples of conscience.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, July 5, [1761].

I learn that you are afflicted by scruples.

You are a prey to this torment because you do not wish to do what I have so many times recommended to you.

All those temptations, the consent, the pleasure, etc., that occur, as you say, you must not confess; no, no, no; and this I take upon my conscience. I assure you on the part of God, that these are only trials, not sins; no, no.

And what I tell you would be told to you not only by the probabilists, but even by all the probabiliorists and tutiorists, such as Concina, Sinnichio, Vendrochio, Fagnano. Only one that has lost his head would tell you the contrary.

Be therefore calm, and remain peaceful; you are always in the state of grace. In these suggestions you not only do not offend God, but you gain merits. Do not, therefore, confess these things, but say Mass with perfect liberty and every assurance. Do you not see that in acting otherwise, and in always being so disturbed you lose devotion, the spirit of prayer, and your peace of mind?

Recommend me to Jesus Christ. I bless you in a special manner. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 365.

To a Superior of the Congregation.

Acceptance of a house in Sicily.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, August 3, 1761.

Father Margotta has been of the same opinion as your Reverence in regard to the establishment of a mission at Sicily.

It is true, at this time, there is no hope of obtaining the authorization to found a house. All that we can hope is that the affair will be connived at. I have resolved to send Father Blasucci as Superior with Fathers Apice and Caputo. Within twenty days, therefore, send me, Father Caputo, but without mentioning anything either to him or to the others, and this for good reasons.

You are at my disposal for Benevento which is more important than any other foundation.

I bless you all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 366.

To the Students of the House at Ciorani.

Regulations made at the canonical visitation.

[The year 1761.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Teresa!

To repair the disorders that have existed until now among our young men, and to preserve as far as possible the good spirit imbibed in the novitiate, I have thought it advisable to leave these regulations, which are taken for the most part from our Rules and from the Constitutions for our young men.

1. Students shall show all possible respect, veneration,

and obedience as well to the Prefect as to the Lector; they shall neither defend nor excuse themselves in their presence. They shall be attentive to what they say with every mark of veneration; they shall not murmur among themselves.

2. Except at the time of recreation or when otherwise necessary, they shall not leave their rooms; nor is it permitted them to walk up and down in the corridors, to go to the class-room, to the choir, or to any other place outside of the studentate without the permission of the Prefect; especially during the time of *siesta* shall they remain in their rooms.

3. In going to the common acts, as for example going to or returning from class, they shall go two by two, with hands folded and eyes modestly cast down; and after the examination in the evening they shall return to the studentate in the same order.

4. During the time of general study they shall observe the strictest silence; they shall not be allowed to speak among themselves, but only to their Prefect and to their Lector.

5. They shall not be allowed to play ball, as it is a source of great distraction and, as we have already seen, scandalizes outsiders.

6. Only the Zelator shall be allowed to have a common key.

7. Let there be no disputes among them, but let one yield to the other. The Zelator shall pay special attention to this point.

8. The Rector as well as the Prefect shall not give permission too readily to students to speak to seculars; nor shall they allow outsiders, or even Fathers and Brothers to go into the recreation of the students. The students with their Prefect or with another Father assigned by the Rector, shall take their recreation apart from the others. Let not permission to eat outside of meal-time be too easily

given even to eat fruit, if they go out very often. The recreations in the gardens shall not be given too often, as they cost a great deal. It can also be a source of scandal.

9. In assigning offices to the students, the Minister shall first come to an understanding with the Prefect.

10. The Rector shall not be too easy in giving permission, when there is question of speaking with seculars; he shall speak to the Prefect and shall assign to the students a companion who is to remain near when they speak to outsiders.

11. The Prefect shall not easily give permission to students to give up study, even though they are laboring under a slight indisposition; instead of allowing them to roam about, he shall make them attend class, if they cannot study.

12. When they go out, they shall always be accompanied by a Father in the absence of the Prefect.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 367.

To Father Giovanni Rizzi, at Iliceto.

He exhorts him to despise his scruples and charges him with making an inquiry.

[November 1761.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I tell you now what I think before God. You are not only not obliged to confess the sins which, as you write me, you certainly remember and can swear never to have confessed, but you do wrong when you accuse yourself of

them; hence you are not obliged to accuse yourself of them, and the confessors that hear you do very wrong.

It is not necessary that you know in detail the reasons, which are certain for me; it is sufficient that I tell you so on my own conscience and before God.

I also add: You should rejoice, for I regard your eternal salvation as assured.[1]

As for Molfetta's son,[2] I, as well as Fathers Ferrara and Mazzini, leave the matter entirely in your hands; I also hold Father Margotta's *vote:* hence you see the youth stands a very good chance.

However, before receiving him write to Fathers Villani, Caione and Fiocchi.[3] I intend to write to them, but perhaps I shall forget to do so: I therefore ask your Reverence to write also as soon as you find an opportunity.

It must be understood that the young man has a patrimony and that, moreover, there is no obstacle to prevent him from entering the Congregation. Live Jesus and Mary!

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Reeeemer.

After the original preserved in our archives at Pagani.

[1] In another letter, of which there still exists a fragment, the saint speaks thus to him: "As to your spirit, would to God that all were in what you call a miserable state. The misery you cause yourself when you go to confession. If you did not confess these things, you would be at peace. And I assure you that you are in the state of grace, and that what you call your sins are apprehensions, fears, torments, but not sins. Rest assured that God loves you. I bless you."

[2] This youth was an acolyte named Pietro Francesco Romano; he received the habit January 17, 1762.

[3] These Fathers were General-Consultors.

LETTER 368.

To D. Nicolò Pentimalli, at S. Eufemia, Diocese of Mileto.

Sentiments of condolence for the death of Father Pentimalli.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, November 28, 1761.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: I know not whether my sorrow at the death of your brother [1] has been greater than yours. May the divine will always be done!

Please accept my very great thanks to you for your charity to our Fathers, and should they still be there, encourage them, and tell them that I have written to them to Messina, thinking that my letter would no longer find them at your place. Let them know that they should also say Masses [2] for Father Amarante [3] whom God has called to himself.

[1] Father Francesco Pentimalli had been sent with Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci and two other Fathers to Sicily to establish a foundation at Girgenti. The Fathers made the journey overland, and when about to go to Messina they were obliged to stop, the communication between Calabria and Sicily having been broken by rumors that a pestilence had broken out. Father Tannoia says: "Seeing it impossible for the moment to proceed, Father Pentimalli halted at S. Eufemia, his native place, for the purpose of giving some rest to his companions; but scarcely had he arrived on November 10, when he was seized with a violent fever, which carried him off in three days. This loss afflicted Alphonsus deeply. Father Pentimalli was one of his best missionaries; for besides his rare talents he had such power over the hearts of others that he could lead them as he wished."

[2] After the death of any member of the Congregation all the priests of the Institute must apply five Masses for the soul of the deceased confrère.

[3] Father Biogio Amarante, a distinguished missionary, died November 2, in our house at S. Angelo a Cupolo. He was born

I again thank you for your great kindness towards my companions, and I remain,

Your very humble and very devoted servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of Signor Vincenzo Pentimalli, doctor of medicine at S. Eufemia d' Aspromonte.

LETTER 369.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, Rector of Iliceto and Master of Novices.

Announcement of the arrival of a novice.

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

NOCERA, November 28, 1761.

The young man who has no patrimony is coming, but as he is a youth of great talent and of an excellent disposition he has been received.

If I mistake not, Fathers Villani and Caione have been written to, but I do not remember having received an answer. Let your Reverence see about the answer, so that afterwards they may not complain.

I hear that the other young man of Molfetta [Francesco Romano] has come and that he is even brighter than the first; the examination of these two youths we shall leave to Father Rizzi.

I bless you all.

After the Roman edition.

November 25, 1722 at Nocera de' Pagani, and had made his profession July 12, 1744.

LETTER 370.

To Father Olympio Pavone, of the Congregation of the Most Holy Sacrament, Author of Various Works of Piety.

He congratulates the author on the subject of his compositions and on the manner in which he treats them.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, December 27, 1761.

My very dear Father: I have read your works; you have given to them all one aim, namely, the frequent reflection on eternity. How much are you not yourself penetrated with the thought of eternal things! Your books prove this; but your conduct has proved this in a still more striking manner. If indeed you have renounced all the affection for this world, if you have entered the holy society of missionaries to which you belong, you have done so only in order to occupy yourself with the eternal Good.

The salutary effect that these thoughts have produced on your mind, you have vividly portrayed in your works, and all those that read them attentively will derive from it, I hope, the same profit. Like reflections are in fact powerful enough by themselves to convert the soul that is most attached to the perishable goods of this earth, and to stimulate pious souls to walk on the road that leads to perfection. Who could deny this? Saints became saints only by reflecting on eternity.

Please accept, my Reverend Father, the expression of the profound respect, with which I have the honor to be

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After a copy printed at the head of the book of Father Pavone, entitled "Via Facile del Paradiso" (The Easy Way to Paradise), edition of 1863.

LETTER 371.

To Father Antonio Tannoia.

He sends a letter addressed to the novices.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, January 28, 1762.

I write specially to the novices who have written to me, but I have besides written another general letter which I beg your Reverence to read *leisurely* to the novices in the chapel. In the next Chapter it may serve the purpose of a sermon.

Let them hear the letter on their knees, so that they may accept it with greater devotion, and read it and make them hear it slowly, slowly; and preserve it, because it will be of use for other novices. I bless you. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

Have the novices read my work *on religious*,[1] because it is full of practical things; point out to them the chapters that are to be read.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 372.

To the Novices in the House at Iliceto.

Inestimable value of the religious vocation. — Means of preserving it.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NOCERA, January 28, 1762.

My very dear Brethren: God knows how much I envy you. Had I only had in my youth, like you, the happi-

[1] The work entitled: "The True Spouse of Jesus Christ," published the preceding year.

ness of living retired in God's house in the midst of so many virtuous companions, who excite one another to love our Lord more and more, and far from this cursed world in which so many are lost!

Yes, I envy you, and I recommend to you to thank God unceasingly for the grace that he has given you to leave the world for the love of him.

These are graces that are not granted to all. How many companions of your age, in your country, are now living a life of distraction, of uneasiness, are exposed to a thousand dangers, and are probably living even away from God; for it is difficult for a young man to live in the world without being a slave of the devil!

But be on your guard; for the enemy always seeks to make you lose your vocation. When he has gained this point, he will have gained everything.

Let every one of you be convinced that there is no one that will not have to encounter his storm amidst great darkness.

There is, therefore, no other remedy than to keep from reasoning with temptation and to have immediately recourse to God, saying: *O Lord! I have given myself entirely to Thee, and I do not wish to leave Thee; even if all the rest abandon Thee, I will always be united to Thee.*

You should also have recourse especially to Mary, who is called the Mother of perseverance; if we have recourse to this tender Mother, and this we should constantly do, it is impossible for us to lose our vocation.

Hold for certain that whoever dies in the Congregation will not only be saved but will be saved as a saint, and will have a high place in heaven.

Attach yourselves, therefore, more and more to the love of Jesus Christ; love is a chain of gold that attaches souls to God, and attaches them so closely that they seem not to be able to become separated from him.

Hence I wish you always to make acts of love in your prayers, Communions, visits, spiritual readings, in your cells, in the refectory, at your walks, in every place and at all times.

He that loves Jesus Christ with his whole heart does not fear to lose him, and he is ready to suffer for the love of him every kind of pain, of contempt, of poverty.

If any one, on the contrary, does not adopt this method he will easily lose his vocation; and this, my dearly beloved Brethren, is the greatest misfortune that can befall you. Hence I pray to God to send you death rather than permit you to lose your vocation — a misfortune that would drag along with it all kinds of evils.

Be persuaded that if you return to the world after having lost your vocation and turned your back on God, you will not have the courage to apply yourselves to prayer; for while wishing to apply yourselves to it you would always hear yourselves reproached for your unfaithfulness. If you would thus neglect prayer, as it is probable you would, and if you found yourselves in the midst of the world, of bad companions, of dangerous occasions, when you would no longer receive special favors from our Lord, who usually treats in this manner those that are unfaithful to his call, what would become of you in time and eternity?

And even if you would save your soul, though this would be difficult, you would at least lose the beautiful crown that God would have prepared for you in order to reward your fidelity. In any case, be assured that you would always lead upon earth an unhappy life, full of continual disquietude, and tormented without ceasing for having left God in order to follow your own caprice.

I repeat: I pray to God to send you death rather than permit that such a misfortune should befall you.

I bless you now in the name of the Blessed Trinity, and especially of Jesus Christ, who by his death has merited

for you the supreme and inappreciable grace of holy perseverance.

I beg you to love very much the Blessed Virgin so that she may obtain for you holy perseverance.

I beg you to love much the Mother of God and to call her to your aid if you wish to sanctify yourselves.

Be full of courage, be joyful! become saints and love Jesus Christ much, for he gave his life and blood for each one of you.

Become saints, and pray to God for me, a poor old man, who is near death without having done anything for God; do you at least who remain here below love him for me.

I hope, however, before death, to see you and to embrace you after you have attached yourselves to Jesus Christ by the holy vows.

I do not cease to pray for you, every day and several times a day; do the same for me.

I embrace you in the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, and bless you anew. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

I have a favor to ask of you; if any one should feel himself importuned by a temptation against his vocation, — I do not mean a transient but a permanent temptation — let him write to me at once, and let him not resolve upon doing anything till he has received my answer; then let him do what he wishes.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 373.

To the Novice, Don Vincenzo Buonopane. [1]

He exhorts the novice to unite himself more and more to Jesus Christ.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, 28, [January, 1762.]

It affords me great pleasure to hear of your consolation. The time for which you so ardently longed has come. See that you do not allow the devil to laugh at you.

Seek to unite yourself closely to Jesus Christ and to our Lady, and do not look for sensible consolations.

When you feel dry and weary, pray and offer yourself to our Lord. Do not doubt that our Lord wishes to make a saint of you.

It grieves me to hear that I have lost the favor of Mgr. Martinez [2] on your account; but I hope he will soon be appeased.

I bless you, and I recommend myself in your prayers to Jesus Christ after holy Communion.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the house of the Redemptorist Fathers, at Dongen, Holland.

[1] Vincenzo Buonopane was born August 26, 1743 at Grottaminarda in the diocese of Avellino; he was admitted to the novitiate December 25, 1761 and to profession, January 6, 1763. He died a holy death at Naples (where he had been sent for a change of air), assisted by Father Girolamo Ferrara, February 7, 1764.

[2] Mgr. Gioacchino Martinez, Bishop of Avellino was opposed to the young man's entrance into the novitiate, as he wished to keep so able a subject for his own diocese.

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